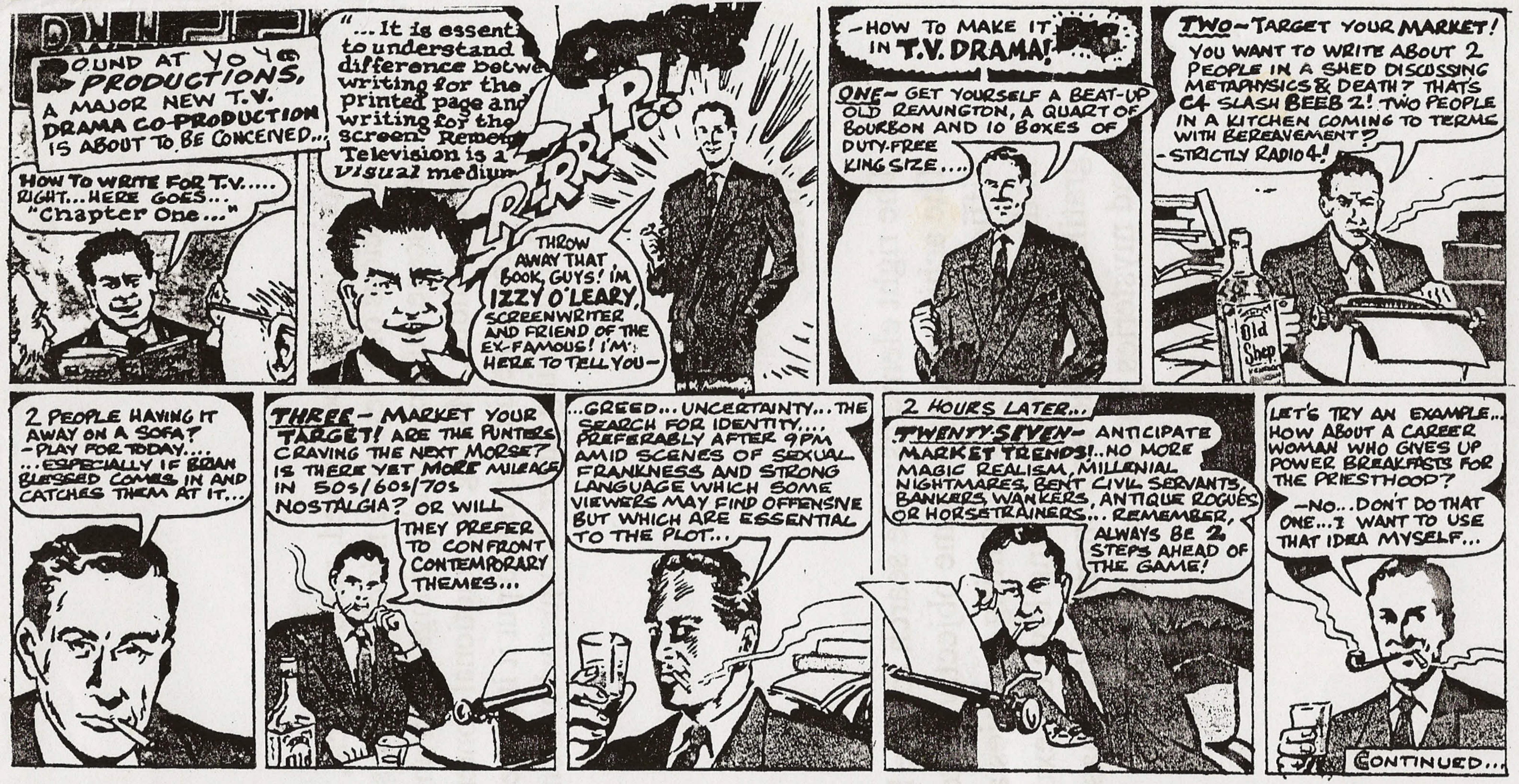
STORIES

stories need to be evolved, more technical, more conscious of a beginning middle and end, setting things in a scene, subtext, making things direct enough and not being oblique. Making the emotional content more direct but at the same time trying to put it into the subtext of what's happening rather than just what's on the surface.

Stories

The right elements; The search for the holy grail, The achievement of some objective after a long and difficult journey, overcoming enemies and danger in the meantime, achieving love or sexual gratification, the excitement of the chase, puzzles and mysteries you have to solve.


ROUND AT YO YO PRODUCTIONS, A MAJOR NEW T.V. DRAMA CO-PRODUCTION IS ABOUT TO BE CONCEIVED...
HOW TO WRITE FOR T.V..... RIGHT... HERE GOES... "Chapter One..."
"... It is essent to understand difference betwe writing for the printed page and writing for the screen. Remem Television is a visual mediu
R-R-R-RIP!..
THROW AWAY THAT BOOK, GUYS! I'M IZZY O'LEARY, SCREENWRITER AND FRIEND OF THE EX-FAMOUS! I'M HERE TO TELL YOU–
–HOW TO MAKE IT BIG IN T.V. DRAMA!
ONE– GET YOURSELF A BEAT-UP OLD REMINGTON, A QUART OF BOURBON AND 10 BOXES OF DUTY-FREE KING SIZE....
TWO– TARGET YOUR MARKET! YOU WANT TO WRITE ABOUT 2 PEOPLE IN A SHED DISCUSSING METAPHYSICS & DEATH? THAT'S C4 SLASH BEEB 2! TWO PEOPLE IN A KITCHEN COMING TO TERMS WITH BEREAVEMENT? –STRICTLY RADIO 4!
Old Shep
2 PEOPLE HAVING IT AWAY ON A SOFA? –PLAY FOR TODAY.... ...ESPECIALLY IF BRIAN BLESSED COMES IN AND CATCHES THEM AT IT...
THREE– MARKET YOUR TARGET! ARE THE PUNTERS CRAVING THE NEXT MORSE? IS THERE YET MORE MILEAGE IN 50s/60s/70s NOSTALGIA? OR WILL THEY PREFER TO CONFRONT CONTEMPORARY THEMES...
...GREED... UNCERTAINTY... THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY.... PREFERABLY AFTER 9PM AMID SCENES OF SEXUAL FRANKNESS AND STRONG LANGUAGE WHICH SOME VIEWERS MAY FIND OFFENSIVE BUT WHICH ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE PLOT...
2 HOURS LATER...
TWENTY-SEVEN– ANTICIPATE MARKET TRENDS!.. NO MORE MAGIC REALISM, MILLENIAL NIGHTMARES, BENT CIVIL SERVANTS, BANKERS, WANKERS, ANTIQUE ROGUES OR HORSETRAINERS... REMEMBER, ALWAYS BE 2 STEPS AHEAD OF THE GAME!
LET'S TRY AN EXAMPLE... HOW ABOUT A CAREER WOMAN WHO GIVES UP POWER BREAKFASTS FOR THE PRIESTHOOD?
–NO... DON'T DO THAT ONE... I WANT TO USE THAT IDEA MYSELF...
CONTINUED...

Visual Storytelling

The Plot ......

Conventionaly we think simply of stories in beginning/middle/end but whatever the ups/downs, pace, slow or fast buid up, etc. the most important factor is that it holds our/the audiences attention. Hence that oft heard phrase "conflict is drama" points the way ......

The emotional doorway to the story is the protagonist, the story is a series of events, each event being a meaningfull change that happens to that someone and that change having avalue - an emotional or ethical value - usualy change comes through conflict. Their action and/or the visual imagery used to tell the story gets interesting if it's not whats expected. Through the reincorporation of images/ideas/moments clues are laid. Finaly leading to the ideal resolve; one which is surprising but yet inevitable. The story should be a strong but simple one..

Script, Structure & Treatment

Moving towards script and storyboard stage we have our basic plot and characters and now pad our plot out more into a treatment before moving to a full description and shot/sequence construction. From the basic outline of the plot you should develop a treatment of the film - working the story out thoroughly - get it into shape - it's nuts n' bolts sturdy structure! Be aware of what is driving the story on - suspense, humour, curiosity, etc... - be aware of momentum, timing, etc. Be aware - beats (those essential emotive moments) form scenes, scenes form sequences (a scene is set in one location, a sequence of scenes may be in various location and time spaces but as a whole, a sequence, deals with a particular storypart) and sequences form acts. Most films are made up of three acts. Finalise the script .

Shoot to Cut!............

The Shots are structured with the end view - that when cut together they form a narrative - they will flow. It is possible to assemble a sequence of shots which condense real time down whilst giving the illusion of continuity - unbroken action. When storyboarding and in final preparation of your shoot your shots must be worked out considering many things.. **COMPOSITION** -size of subject in frame, position of subject in frame, position of subject to b/ground, f/ground, others, etc....**CONTINUITY OF ACTION** - direction of eyeline, subject movement within frame, camera movement, etc..**THE SEQUENCE OF SHOTS IN RELATION TO EACH OTHER**-Watch how sequences are cut together. The French term *mise-en-scene* is quite literaly putting in the scene; the direction encompassing the performance, camera placement and movement, lens choice, composition, etc. Always consider carefully the dramatic intentions, who and in what way should the viewer identify with, knowing the heart of the film means come what may (whatever sod's law slings youre way) you can maintain the narrative, performance and overall artistic intentions of the film.

Storyboard

Structure out in shots - tell this story now in pictures. What kind of shots - establishing wide (WS), moving with the subject (PAN), a cut away, an extreme close up (ECU), parallel action (showing same time, other action/place but connected action), medium shot (MS), etc..... Storyboarding from your script will help make it clearer if the sequences are working, if they will cut together, it reveals the proposed coverage and cutting patterns and so it will help all those involved in the production to have a clear usefull overview. You don't have to be a great artist - many a great director has sketched out matchstick men style silverscreen stars on their storyboards. It should be informative, giving a clear indication of shot size, angle on subject and the action/dialogue it is covering. You don't need to draw every frame; especially in shot/reverse shot conversations but storyboarding can help you organise your thoughts on coverage, cutting patterns and style and communicate them clearly to the camera and art departments.

Production 2

Another great visualising tool/method is to use a stills camera to make up a photo-storyboard. With the obvious advantages that the photographic medium will offer; it's optical and graphic properties, depth of field, focal length, lens choice and light and art dept. notions can be explored. Equaly so some sequences are better sketched due to difficulties of staging, due to location, extras, access, action, art dressing requirements, etc.. But particularly on smaller dramatic scenes with a small cast Bearing in mind the comic strip nature of a storyboard, the realities of shooting in the location with the performance for real, there should be room in drama (not commercials where they are a blueprint bible that cover all backs concerned) for creative divergence, provided it is in keeping with good storytelling.

Line Script

Mark up a shooting script, the script with scene nos. headings, with pencil lines bracketing portions of the scene, ech representing a camera angle with brief identifying description This is a key tool for the Director, Camera Dept., Sound Dept, Continuity, and AD (Assistant Director0 , indicating how much coverage you're shooting. Shows what edit choices you have in the overlaps, where there may be gaps or weak points, and also will assist in finding ways to combine shots if time is running out.

On the actual shoot the continuity person will mark up a fresh copy as an **actually shot.line script.** This along with **continuity, sound and camera report sheets** go to the editor in the cutting room.

Floorplans

This is a usefull tool to design camera positions to maximise the shot/set-up ratio whilst still giving you a strong variety of shots. It will allow the director, and continuity to check that no shot crosses the line, and assist the AD in scheduling the most efficient shooting order for the shots.The floorplans should be marked with camera positions, performer action and stage-line. Also possible principle lighting set-ups can be marked up too, if desired.

Shot List

Shots are numbered as per scene/storyboard: eg scene 1 shot 1 ELS snowy landscape with small black car crossing.

Budget

A financial overview & reviews from start to finish are vital. Remember things like transport & sustinence need financial & logistical planning.

Equipment List

The more detailed this is the less chance there is of forgetting to bring a vital piece of kit to/on any particular location/day, or conversely leaving it there.Each department is responsible during production for labeling up, checking, organising to list their equipment, consumerables and stock.

Props List

Responsibility of the art dept. Compiled marking up script; highlighting those mentioned & noting others. Gather props, finalise list with source or potential source, label up unobtrusively to help with their return later.

Locations

Find suitable locations, remember the larger the better, it can be dressed for looks, and will ALWAYS look much smaller on film. Photocopy and mark up relevant pages from A-Z. Include public transport and parking information, address, phone, etc. Also supply the names & contact nos. for localk police & hospital. identify location by both script name and actual.

Remember:: **"All mistakes happen in preproduction"**

Casting & crewing
For cast advertise in PCR, search spotlight & contact agents, etc.
Conduct casting sessions idealy partialy to (video) camera.
Finalise crew and crewing positions.

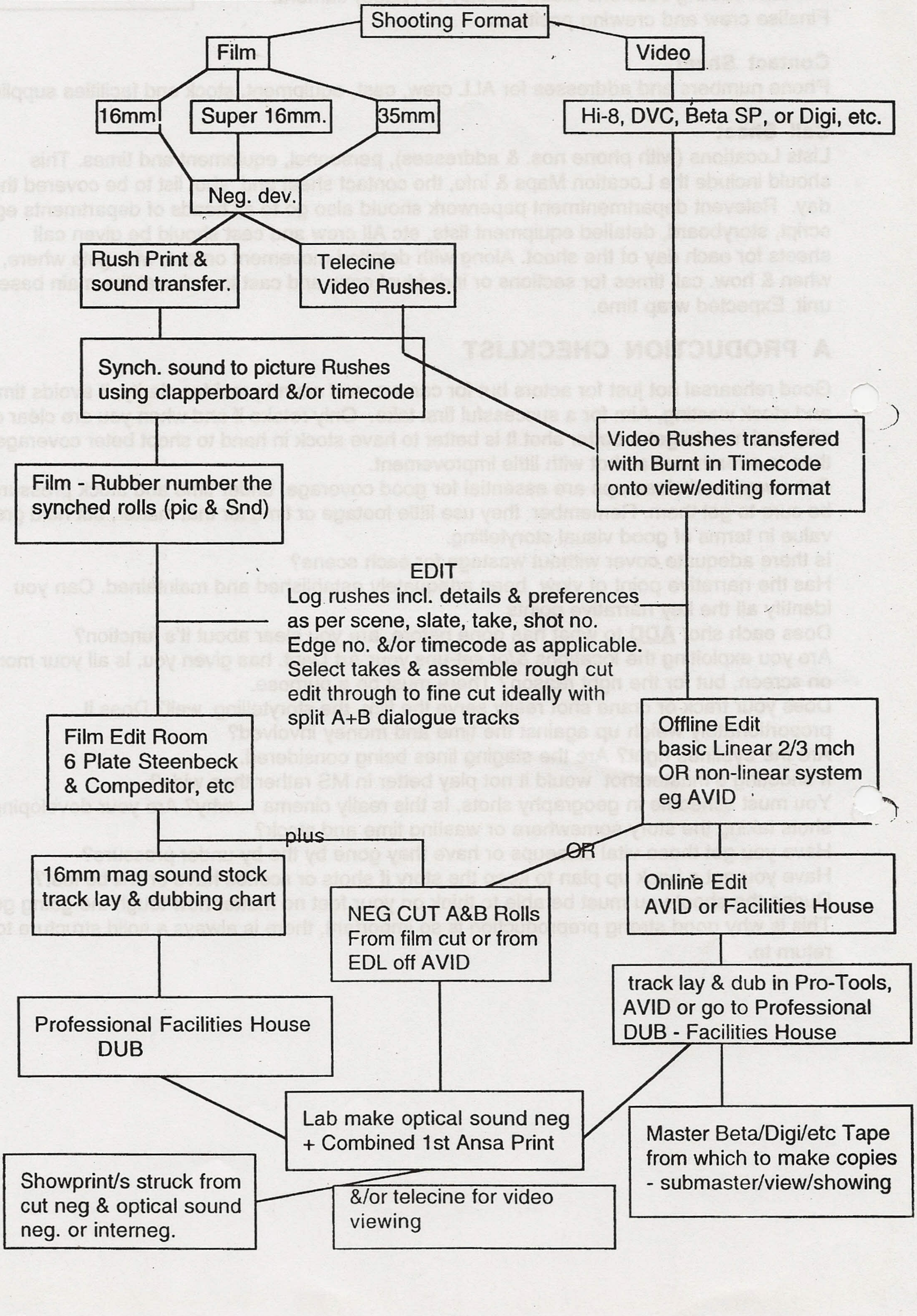
Contact Sheet
Phone numbers and addresses for ALL crew, cast, equipment, stock and facilities suppliers.

Call Sheet
Lists Locations (with phone nos. & addresses), personnel, equipment and times. This should include the Location Maps & info, the contact sheet and shot list to be covered that day. Relevent departmentment paperwork should also go to all heads of departments eg a script, storyboard, detailed equipment lists, etc All crew and cast should be given call sheets for each day of the shoot. Along with detailed movement orders; who gets where, when & how. call times for sections or individual crew and cast to arrive at the main base unit. Expected wrap time.

A PRODUCTION CHECKLIST

Good rehearsal not just for actors but for camera and sound provides clarity, it avoids time and stock wasting, Aim for a successful first take. Only retake if and when you are clear on why and how to get a better shot.It is better to have stock in hand to shoot beter coverage than to overshoooot a shot with little improvement.
Cut aways and close-ups are essential for good coverage, under time and stock pressure be sure to get them. Remember they use little footage or time for that matter, but hold great value in terms of good visual storytelling.
Is there adequate cover without wastage for each scene?
Has the narrative point of view been adequately established and maintained. Can you identify all the key narrative points
Does each shot **ADD** to what has gone before, are you clear about it's function?
Are you exploiting the locations &/or set-ups your Art Dept. has given you, is all your money on screen, but for the right reason? There must be a purpose.
Does your track or crane shot really serve the film, the storytelling, well? Does it proportionately weigh up against the time and money involved?
Are the eyelines right? Are the staging lines being considered.
If shooting s mastershot would it not play better in MS rather than wide?
You must schedule in geography shots. Is this really cinema ....why? Are your developing shots taking the story somewhere or wasting time and stock?
Have you got those vital closeups or have they gone by the by under pressure?
Have you got a back up plan to keep the story if shots or scenes have or will be lost?
During the shoot you must be able to think on your feet no matter how tough the going gets. This is why good strong preproduction is so important, there is always a solid structure to return to.

Production Overview - Post-Production


Shooting Format
Film
Video
16mm
Super 16mm.
35mm
Hi-8, DVC, Beta SP, or Digi, etc.
Neg. dev.
Rush Print & sound transfer.
Telecine Video Rushes.
Synch. sound to picture Rushes using clapperboard &/or timecode
Video Rushes transfered with Burnt in Timecode onto view/editing format
Film - Rubber number the synched rolls (pic & Snd)
EDIT
Log rushes incl. details & preferences as per scene, slate, take, shot no.
Edge no. &/or timecode as applicable.
Select takes & assemble rough cut edit through to fine cut ideally with split A+B dialogue tracks
Film Edit Room
6 Plate Steenbeck & Compeditor, etc
Offline Edit
basic Linear 2/3 mch OR non-linear system eg AVID
plus
OR
16mm mag sound stock track lay & dubbing chart
NEG CUT A&B Rolls From film cut or from EDL off AVID
Online Edit AVID or Facilities House
track lay & dub in Pro-Tools, AVID or go to Professional DUB - Facilities House
Professional Facilities House DUB
Lab make optical sound neg + Combined 1st Ansa Print
Master Beta/Digi/etc Tape from which to make copies - submaster/view/showing
Showprint/s struck from cut neg & optical sound neg. or interneg.
&/or telecine for video viewing

An Overview

"All mistakes happen in preproduction"

A PRODUCTION PROCESS GUIDE CHECKLIST

Preproduction

- Scriptwriting (from idea through to full script)
- crewing
- Gather and study appropriate reference material (eg other films, photographs, paintings etc).
- Preproduction meetings with Camera, Sound, Art and Editing Depts. Aesthetic & practical considerations to realise project.
- Work out outline production schedule - make up production board
- Budgeting - developed from initial proposed budget, updated & reviewed regularly
- Fundraising, dealmaking and donation hunting..
- Further production meetings with "heads" of all departments.
- Work out detailed production schedule
- Script revision
- Casting
- Location Scouting
- Shooting Script
- Equipment List
- Props List
- Storyboarding
- Booking equipment
- Arranging film & sound stock
- Arranging Insurance
- Establish Lab contacts
- Line script
- Shot list
- Rehearsals
- Floorplans &/or Lighting plans
- Build or Set dressing
- Contact Sheet
- Final preproduction meetings
- Call sheets & Location Maps & details

Production

- Pick up & test equipment
- Shooting all principal photography + if poss.
- Sound recording (including wild tracks, fx, and atmos)
- Process film rushes daily if poss.
- transfer sound regularly
- view rushes daily
- Ideally sync. rushes daily
- production stills
- Wrap shoot, return equipment, props, etc.

A POST-PRODUCTION PROCESS GUIDE CHECKLIST

Post-production

- Work out detailed post-production schedule incl. recording music, opticals (if any), shooting titles, dub, neg cutting (if appropriate), final lab facility requirements, any ADR or additional sound gathering, any reshoot or additional imagery, etc..
- Synch rushes
- Rubber number synched rushes
- Log rushes then break down as per slates.
- All sound rushes in addition ie wild, fx and atmos tracks should be logged
- Collate all paper work from the shoot - line script, continuity notes, camera & Sound report sheets, Lab report sheets, logging notes, Director's notesetc.
- Establish a clear system for filing rushes and trims
- Make first assembly edit
- View and discuss with director ideas for first "fat" rough cut
- Rough cut
- Record & lay in temp music if appropriate
- Record & find additional sound material required
- Shoot any additional imagery required
- Book dub
- Book rostrum, artwork etc. if required
- View & discuss rough cut with director
- Make fine cut
- Arrange opticals if required
- Cut in any optical effects
- Shoot titles
- Cut in titles
- Lock Picture
- Record & lay in final music
- Lay tracks
- Make up dub charts
- Dub
- Mark up work print for neg cutting (if appropriate)
- Send to neg cutters
- send sound mix for transfer to optical neg
- Deliver cut neg (A + B rolls) & optical neg to lab
- discuss grading requirements with grader @ lab.
- View 1st ansa. print
- Discuss any corrections* required
- view 2nd ansa print if applicable*
- View and Collect show print
- get telecine from print
- Viewing & assesing
- Screening
- distribution & festivals
- don't forget stills & publicity

7 EDITING: TEMPORAL CONNECTIONS

In 1920 the Soviet filmmaker and theorist Lev Kuleshov performed a now famous experiment demonstrating that the meaning of shots in sequence can be created entirely through editing. Kuleshov used a close-up shot of the Russian actor Moszhukhin's expressionless face as a reaction shot in three different sequences. The actor is seen "reacting" to a bowl of soup, a woman in a coffin and a child playing with a toy bear. Audiences viewing the scenes marveled at Moszhukhin's sensitive performance in each situation, though in every instance it was the same close-up.

① Temporal connection
-man drops glass
glass splashes
on floor

While the power of the editing process to shape meaning is undeniable, this type of wholesale invention is a special case. In most narrative films, shots are rarely neutral building blocks as Kuleshov used them, but have been composed to express an idea and tell a story according to the script. Each shot, together with the accompanying soundtrack, contains narrative and graphic information that predetermines key editing decisions such as the length and order of shots. This view of editing emphasizes the director's and the writer's roles in shaping the storytelling logic that provides the basis for any decision the editor makes.

② Spatial:-
WS-of Buck
palace
C.A. of
carriages
at front
door.

When we speak of storytelling logic, we are actually referring to the structure of shots, sequences and scenes. Structure controls the order in which the story information is given to the viewer. It is as important to the storytelling process as the actual information being presented. Since structure in films can be presented in a storyboard in ways that a screenplay cannot convey, the visualization process can be considered part of the writing and, ultimately, the editing process.

③ Logical connection
↓
WS of Buck.
palace.
M-S of Queen
at desk.

The Narrative Impulse

Novelist E. M. Forster's often quoted definition of plot is a good place to begin understanding the kind of structural logic that motivates editing choices. Forster began by describing a series of events that were not a plot: "The King died and then the Queen died." But, as Forster observed, if we say "The King died and the Queen died of grief," we have described a plot because there is a causal connection.

In the course of any story this cause and effect relationship is the underlying scheme that involves the reader. It does this by asking the reader to become involved in making the logical connections between events. Forster's example is simplified to make a point and doesn't show us how an author might reveal the relationship between the King and Queen. For instance, in the early chapters the Queen might be portrayed as indifferent to the King's death. As the story progresses, however, the author might reveal small details that would explain that the Queen, having assumed the throne takes care not to reveal her feelings for fear of being seen as weak by her subjects. Or we might learn in chapter one that the Queen has died and not discover until the last page of the story that the cause of her illness was the King's death. In both cases, the reader is provoked into speculation by the order and manner in which the plot is revealed even though the same basic events are being related in each version of the story.

In fiction, cause and effect is frequently set up as a question and answer scheme that encourages the reader's participation. The cliff-hanger ending in a serialized story, where the answer to the question of what will happen next is withheld to create suspense, is an example of the most exaggerated exploitation of this device.

Stories that use a question and answer strategy may be set up in many ways. A question may be answered through the accumulation of detail over several dozen pages or it might be answered succinctly shortly after it has been posed. In fact, the question and answer presentation of information usually occurs on every page of a story operating on several levels simultaneously. This is as true for a screenplay or film as it is for a novel or short story. Continuity editing is based on these types of question and answer strategies, though we usually speak of them as connections. Listed below are the three most basic types of connections found in continuity editing:

> Temporal connections: We cut from a man dropping his drinking glass in one shot to the glass breaking on the floor in the second shot.
>
> Spatial connections: We cut from a wide shot of the White House to a recognizable detail of the White House in a closer shot—for example, the portico and front door.
>
> Logical connections: We cut from a wide shot of the White House to a shot of the President seated in an office. No temporal or spatial connection is necessary in this combination. If we recognize the White House and we recognize the President, then we make the logical connection that he's seated in an office in the White House, even though there is no actual information presented to tell us we are in the White House.

As you can see, these types of connections create the illusion of a real, physical world. We can probably think of them as background connections that establish the environment of a film, but they also can be used to shape the plot and dramatic content as well.

Narrative Motion

⇒ Question & answer scenario.

To advance the narrative it is necessary not only to ask questions but to set up expectations. For instance, in the example of the two shots used to show the man dropping his drinking glass, questions and answers are only used to depict action. If, however, we know that one of the drinks at the party contains poison, we will be provoked into asking all sorts of who, what, when, where and why questions about the poison. Since we bring all sorts of knowledge and experience to any story we read or watch, we will speculate about possible answers to all the questions raised. Nearly all editing strategies in narrative film are devised to set up a framework of expectations in a series of shots. The result is narrative motion.

This way of arranging shots is fundamental in film editing. Even dialectical montage, which Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein felt was an alternative to cause and effect editing, exploited narrative motion by setting up expectations and asking questions. In Eisenstein's dialectical shot pattern of thesis-antithesis-synthesis, the first two shots ask the question "What is the connection between these ideas?" The answer, supplied by Eisenstein in shot three, is synthesis. In this analysis, Soviet montage and Hollywood continuity cutting are not polar opposites but variations of the same principle of question and answer strategies.

Q&A Patterns

The simplest question and answer editing pattern requires only two shots—for example, a shot of a person looking offscreen followed by a shot of the object the person is observing. Patterns are not limited by length and may require dozens of shots to complete a question and answer cycle. Or, the patterns can be varied by changing the order of the shots. Though we do not speak of their storytelling in this way, much of what we appreciate in the films of directors like Buñuel, Hitchcock, Godard, Welles and Truffaut are the ways in which they develop question and answer patterns that challenge the viewer.

Context

The meaning of any given Q and A pattern can be further extended or modified by changing the context that frames it. For instance, in the Kuleshov experiment, our understanding of the man's reaction to the soup, coffin and child is framed by our assumption that the man is sincerely moved in each scene. If a new scene is added establishing that he is faking his responses, then we will interpret the original sequences differently. While this may seem like rudimentary plotting, the manipulation of these

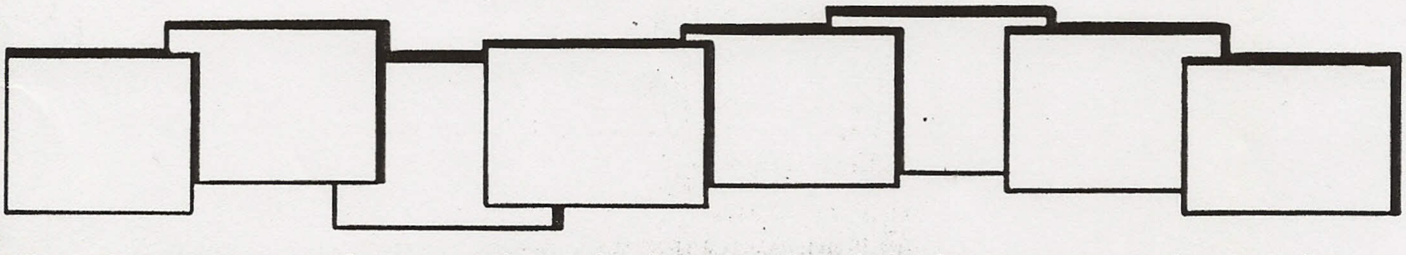


Figure 7.1: Question and answer relationship between shots links them into an overlapping chain.

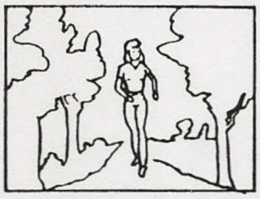
types of narrative elements was crucial to the way Alfred Hitchcock created suspense or Buster Keaton constructed a gag.

Using the Patterns

For me, the main concern for the visualizer is not the pictorial elements of a shot or sequence, but the structure of the sequence—or, to put it another way, what the viewer knows and when. As it turns out, interesting compositional ideas are usually the result of narrative invention rather than daring pictorial experimentation.

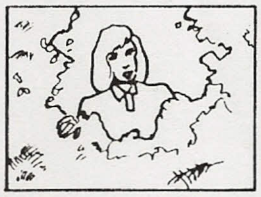
This first series of examples illustrates how the narrative context and question and answer pattern determine how we read a scene.

A



Example One
Narrative context: Our scene takes place in the woods on a summer day. Laura, a teenager, is looking for her older brother Tom. At this point in the story we have not yet seen Tom and so we do not know what he looks like.

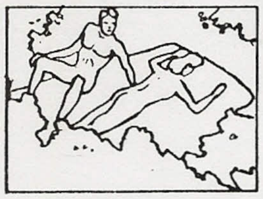
B



Shot A: Laura enters the woods.
Question: "Where is Tom?"

* Shot B: Laura stops short a few yards from a clearing.
New Question: "What has she found?"

C

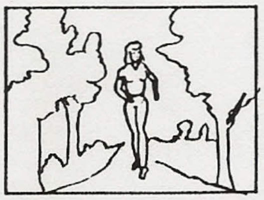


Shot C: Tom and a girl lying naked on a blanket in a clearing.
Answer: "Laura has found her brother."

This is a straightforward question and answer editing pattern, and the viewer can easily anticipate the outcome. If, in the next example, we change the context slightly so that we know what Tom looks like, then shot C becomes an answer to shot A and simultaneously raises a new question.

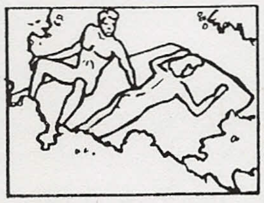
Example Two

A



Shot A: Laura enters the woods.
Question: "Where is Tom?"

C

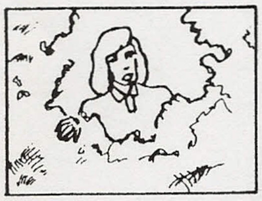


* Shot C: Tom and a girl lying naked on a blanket in a clearing.
Answer: "Tom is here."
New Question: "Will Laura find Tom?"

Shot B: Laura stops short a few yards from the clearing.
Answer: "Laura has found Tom."

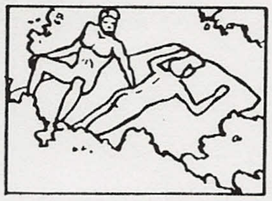
Now, if we were to prolong the time before Laura's arrival in shot B, the viewer would share a secret with the filmmaker by knowing that Tom is nearby in a compromising situation. This editing pattern places an answer before the question, thereby creating suspense. We can do this by changing the order of the shots and adjusting the context.

B

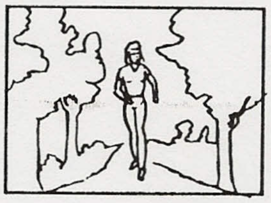


Example Three
Let's change the narrative context again. This time we know that Tom's

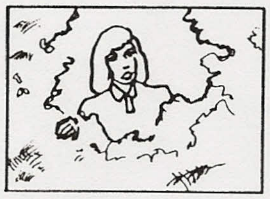
C



A



B



sister is looking for him. However, we have not seen her in the story at this point and do not know what she looks like. The context, set in a previous scene, leaves Tom's whereabouts unknown. As the scene opens we receive our first answer.

Shot C: Tom and a girl lying naked on a blanket in a clearing.
Answer: "Tom is here."

Shot A: A girl enters the woods.
Question: "Is this Laura?"

Shot B: Laura stops short a few yards from the clearing.
Answer: "This is Laura."

By revealing Tom in a compromising situation in the opening shot, a suspenseful situation is established for the remainder of the scene. When Laura enters the woods in the second shot, the fuse is lit, and we know that a potentially embarrassing meeting is possible. Hitchcock frequently sets up a scene this way by placing the audience in a privileged (and uncomfortable) position by providing them with information that the protagonist desperately needs but cannot obtain. A further embellishment of the same idea might undermine our expectations by letting Laura find other couples making love in the woods before discovering Tom. These earlier encounters would be designed to momentarily encourage us to believe that Laura has found Tom before revealing to us that the couples are strangers to Laura. This would make us unsure of our ability to second-guess the narrative and more susceptible to the surprise of the actual meeting.

In addition to the narrative context created by the filmmaker, the audience brings certain assumptions to their understanding of any scene that the filmmaker uses. These assumptions might include popularly held notions of morality or familiarity with storytelling conventions. The filmmaker can play with these assumptions by supporting or subverting them.

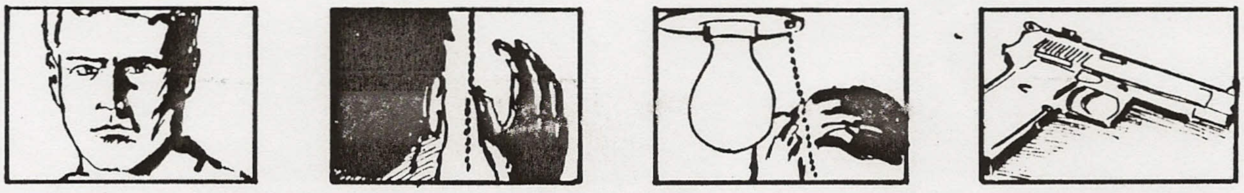
Hitchcock did this rather perversely in *Psycho* by killing off the person that for the first third of the film the audience believes is the protagonist. This was completely unexpected, breaking all the rules of conventional narrative. The result is that the audience feels completely abandoned, as indeed they were, by any kind of moral reason in the fictional world they are watching. The point of these examples is this: Editing patterns and the narrative context do not necessarily lay the events of a story out in simple chronological order.

More Q and A Variations

In addition to altering the order of question and answer patterns, the rhythm and timing of the patterns can be varied by withholding some or all of expected narrative information for a few shots or for several scenes. It is also possible to have more than one question or answer raised within a single shot or combined within a shot. Using a mini-noir scenario we can look at a few examples:

- A question can be raised in one shot and answered several shots later rather than in the following shot.

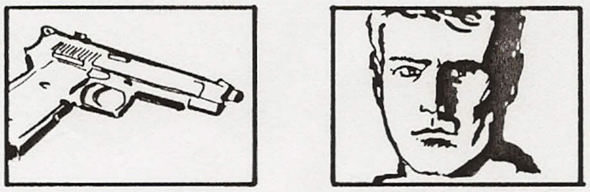
Sequence A



In this case the look in the first shot would ordinarily be answered by a shot of the gun. However, the answer has been postponed while shots 2 and 3 show the man turning on the light.

- An answer can be given in a shot and the question raised later.

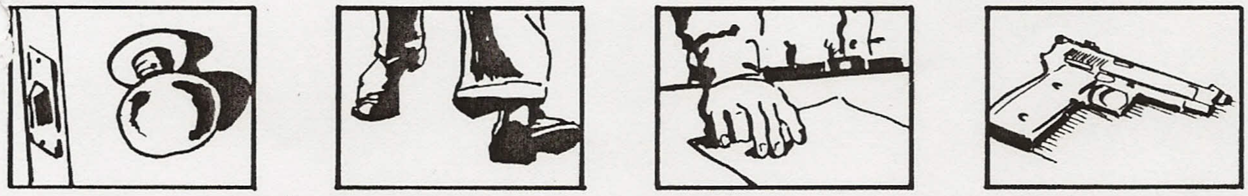
Sequence B



In this version the cut on the look has been reversed so that we see the object of attention before the look.

- A question can be raised and elaborated on in a series of shots before being answered in a single shot or in a series of shots.

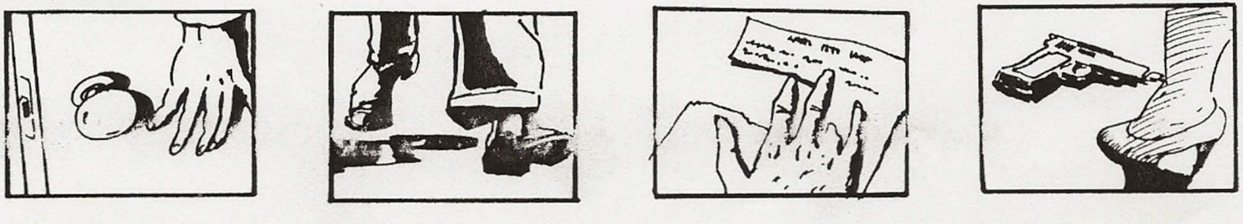
Sequence C



The question in these shots, of course, is who is the person coming through the door and why. The partial answer is that it is a man, and in frame 3 we see that he has one finger missing. In frame 4 we learn that he is there to find the gun.

- There can be more than one question raised in a shot or shots. Consequently, more than one answer can be given in a shot or shots.

Sequence D



In frame 1 two questions are raised: Who is coming through the door and whose hand emerges from behind the door? When the person enters the room in frame 2 we receive a partial answer, learning that the person is a man. But frame 2 also raises the question of the significance of the pool of black ink on the floor. In frame 3 the man puts his hand on the sheet of paper on the table. This answers the question of the man's identity since we now know it is the man with the missing finger, but a new question is raised: Why has part of the letter been carefully removed? Finally, in frame 3, we learn that the gun is on the floor. However, a new question is raised: Who is the woman standing over the gun?

Compared with the previous examples, this last series includes far more information in the same number of shots. This is an exaggeration of Q and A patterns, but the subtle use of these same strategies was exploited by Bergman, Kurosawa, Dreyer and many other filmmakers to shape psychological fiction and implicate the viewer in the moral dilemmas they presented.

If we try to imagine a graphic representation of the question and answer relationships we have been looking at, the shots do not appear connected end-to-end as the editor arranges the actual film stock, but rather they resemble a series of overlapping panels—like a deck of cards that has been fanned out. Figure 7.1 on page 147 shows the narrative relationship between shots in a series. Each is connected to the next by some cause and effect relationship. Some shots are more prominent narratively than others, while some shots remain in the background without answering questions or raising new ones, simply supporting existing information with additional detail.

The Limits of Clarity

Because question and answer storytelling techniques frequently relate information in a roundabout way, this indirectness may appear confusing to the uninitiated when described in a screenplay, shot list or storyboard. Screenwriters, directors and editors may be encouraged to avoid unusual Q and A patterns because it is mistakenly believed that the results will be clearer to an audience. An example of this is the classic establishing shot at the opening of a scene. For instance, a scene ends as we learn that an understudy in a play is on her way to the theater to replace the ailing lead. In the opening shot of the next scene we see the theater. This familiar pattern merely shows us what we already expect and does little to raise expectations or contribute to narrative motion. If, however, the introduction of the theater is composed of separate shots that raise questions, then the viewer is engaged in connecting these pieces to form a meaningful statement. Consider this sequence of shots as a way of introducing the theater location:

A CU of a few crumpled theater programs on the ground.
+ A CU of stage flats in a garbage dumpster.
+ A CU of an empty marquee with most of the letters taken down.
= A closed show.

This is a storytelling alternative to an establishing shot showing the front of a theater with a banner across the lobby doors with the word "closed"

KATZ- 'Film directing: Shot by shot ... '

3 patterns of staging.

A

L

9 STAGING DIALOGUE SEQUENCES

When staging dialogue scenes for the camera, the director must fulfill two goals: the honest expression of human relationships and the presentation of these relationships to the viewer. The first goal is determined by the script and the actor's performance. The second goal is determined by staging, cinematography and editing. On the set, however, the director often finds that the actor's process and the practical and dramatic requirements of the camera are at odds. There is no right or wrong solution to this classical opposition, only what works best for the filmmaker in a given situation.

The visual challenge of staging is essentially a spatial problem—the ability to predict in three-dimensional space what will work on a two-dimensional screen. The spatial effect of a filmed sequence is particularly difficult to visualize because it is comprised of so many different fluid elements, such as the changing composition of the filmed image when the camera or the subject is in motion. Only a few dozen directors in the history of narrative film have exercised a recognizable staging style, and it remains a peculiarly elusive skill to acquire. The challenge is made more difficult by the lack of opportunities for practicing the craft.

A Method for Visualizing Staging

In the arts, technique is largely a matter of improved perception. In music, for example, this means learning to hear more accurately; in film it means learning to see more precisely. Specifically, cinematic "vision" relies on spatial memory and recognition, skills that can be learned and refined. This will be our goal in the next several chapters.

First, we will need a basic vocabulary of shots and actor placement. Any system of construction will suffice provided the filmmaker uses its elements consistently. For our purpose, the Hollywood continuity style offers a familiar set of solutions that can be broken down into a system of building blocks. This programmed approach, however, is not simply intended to offer stock solutions. By knowing the basic ways in which people position themselves in conversation and the accompanying camera setups used to record them, you will have a secure base from which to improvise, break rules and take creative risks, while fulfilling your basic responsibility to the actors, the script and your personal vision.

This spatial approach is made up of five basic areas:

Staging stationary actors

Staging moving actors

Using the depth of the frame
Staging camera movement
Staging camera movement and actor movement together

The first building blocks we'll look at are staging patterns for two subjects. In the photoboard examples camera angles, lenses and editing patterns will be compared so that you can see how slight adjustments alter our understanding of a scene. Once the staging patterns for two subjects are established, we can apply these same general principles to three- and four-subject situations in subsequent chapters.

Before getting to the actual examples, we should first look at some of the basic staging conventions found in narrative film with the understanding that they represent the starting point for new ideas rather than the limits of what is permissible.

Frontality

This is a basic convention of Western art. Frontality is just a way of saying that the subjects of a picture tend to face the viewer or, in the case of film, the camera. Many staging arrangements in the movies are basically frontal, meaning that subjects in conversation tend to face the camera rather than each other. This type of body positioning is not without precedence in real life, but in films it is often adjusted to the camera's needs.

A scene that stages actors in a frontal position can be recorded in a single master shot. If, however, one of the actors is turned away from the camera (partially or completely) more than one camera angle is necessary to see both actors' faces. This represents the two major editing approaches to staging: one in which the actors face a single camera setup and the other in which multiple camera viewpoints are edited together.

The Master Shot

The master shot is the one shot that is wide enough to include all the actors in the scene and that runs for the entire length of the action. When directors speak of the master, they usually mean that it is part of a plan of coverage that includes other camera setups in the triangle system that will eventually be edited together. But there are also times when the master shot is the only shot the director feels is necessary.

The Sequence Shot

Normally, the camera remains motionless in the master shot, particularly if cutting to other camera angles is anticipated. If the master is a moving shot, the camera is fluidly repositioned with a dolly throughout the course of the scene, essentially combining several camera angles that in an edited sequence would be obtained by individual shots. This approach to staging is also called the sequence shot and usually employs movement of the actors along with the traveling camera. Generally speaking, the sequence shot respects frontality more than an edited sequence. This is because editing permits, and routinely links, shots that are opposed by as much as 180 degrees. The equivalent change in a sequence shot is very nearly impossible to do quickly, let alone repeatedly. Therefore, the moving camera in a dialogue sequence shot tends to maintain a general viewing direction. We will look at this more closely in the chapter on mobile blocking.

Shot Size and Distance

One version of the master shot, the medium two-shot, was so characteristic of American films of the '30s and '40s that the French call it the "plan Americain" or the American shot. In the early '30s the two-shot was used to cover entire dialogue sequences without resorting to close-ups. This was due in part to the advent of sound in pictures and the long stretches of dialogue that accompanied them. The cumbersome blimped cameras were less mobile than the cameras used for silent films and the two-shot reduced the need to move the camera. This technical limitation was quickly overcome, but the two-shot remained in use for years because it was found to be a relaxed framing device for comedies and musicals.

Personally, I like the distance and objectivity that two-shot and full figure shots afford. The body can be wonderfully expressive, and people often use body language to indicate their relationship to others: for example, by where they stand in a room or by their different ways of approaching a rival, friend or lover. The way a person moves can be as distinctive as his or her voice, and most of us can identify a friend at a distance by some characteristic gesture long before we see his or her face. Expressive body movement falls within the range of the full shot and the medium shot. Entire scenes can be staged effectively at this distance without ever resorting to a close-up.

The Shot, Reverse Shot Pattern

When players are seen in alternating close-ups, the shot, reverse shot pattern is one of the most useful solutions. No cutting strategy better represents the Hollywood style than this one. The popularity of this setup is that it offers the widest range of cutting options and includes two important advantages that the two-shot lacks. The first advantage is that we get to see a subject's isolated reaction to dialogue; the second is that the point of view changes within the scene. In addition, the eye-line match between one character and another helps to establish a sense of spatial unity.

Sight Lines and Eye Contact

In any shot of one actor the closer the sight line is to the camera the more intimate our contact with the actor will be. In the most extreme case the actor can look directly into the lens and make eye contact with the viewer. This very confrontational relationship can be quite startling.

The most frequent use of direct eye contact is in subjective camera sequences in which the audience is made to see things through the eyes of one of the characters. This is relatively infrequent in narrative film and most of the time dialogue scenes are shot with the sight lines of the actors [illegible]ly to the left or right of the camera. In this case, it is common practice to maintain the same distance from the camera for sight lines in alternating

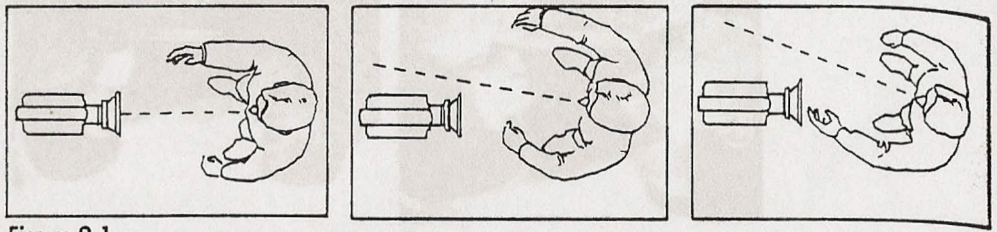


Figure 9.1

close-ups of two or more actors. Figure 9.1 is a comparison of setups for close-ups, each illustrating a different sight line relative to the camera.

Once you have acquired some feel for the psychological and dramatic implications of sight lines and eye contact, you will be able to make subtle shifts within a sequence for dramatic emphasis.

The Staging System

Unless a director spends a great deal of time training himself to see all the possibilities of setup and actor placement, he usually relies on a few all-purpose strategies for any scene. If he allows his actors greater freedom, interesting new options may arise, but unless he has a solid command of staging for the camera, the production process will ultimately undermine his experimentation. The director will find himself at odds with the cinematographer and producer, who won't understand why he keeps restaging a scene, with the consequent loss of time and, frequently, the spontaneity of his cast.

The skill this director lacks is the ability to visualize the actors and camera in space, and the composition that will result from any combination of these elements. This is where the pattern system of staging comes in.

Letter Patterns

The staging system we will be using from this point on identifies two categories of actor placement: pattern and position. We will discuss pattern first.

> Pattern: There are three basic *patterns* of figure deployment in a frame. We will call them the "A," "I" and "L" patterns. These are the letters that grouped players resemble when viewed from above.

The significance of the patterns is that *they are the simplest arrangement of actors according to the line of action.* Therefore, staging patterns relate to *camera placement.*

As you can see on the following page, the A and L patterns require three or more players to complete the letter shape. The only arrangement for two subjects is the I pattern. Figure 9.2 illustrates all three patterns.

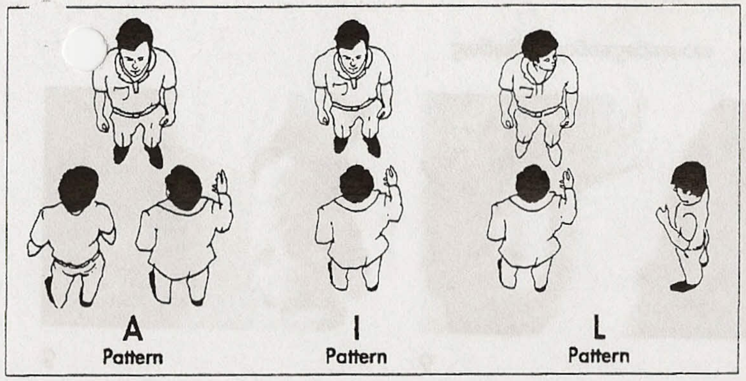


Figure 9.2: Patterns.

> Position: This refers to the direction the subjects are facing within a pattern. For any given pattern there can be many positions.

Most importantly, position relates to the composition of the frame. This means that once the camera has been placed for a given pattern, the more subtle arrangement of the actors (the direction they face in the frame) is determined by their positions. An experienced director will consider pattern and position simultaneously, but in the beginning they are more easily understood as separate concepts. Three typical positions in the I pattern are shown in Figure 9.3.

One last point: **The I pattern for two players is the basic building block in our system.** This is because the line of action can be established between only two people at a time. When there are more than two people in a conversation, the line of action moves as explained in Chapter 6. This is good news since we will only have to learn the positions for two subjects in order to apply them to larger groups. From the cameraman's point of view, the I pattern is found in the A and L patterns whenever a series of close-ups and singles are required.

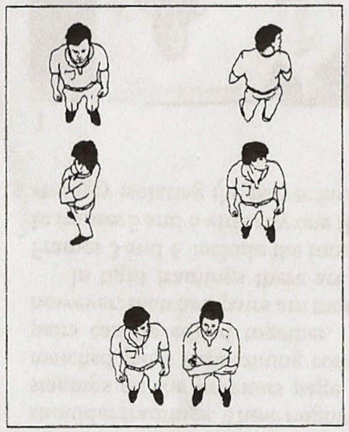


Figure 9.3: Positions. All the positions are in the I pattern.

Staging Dialogue for Two Subjects

For the sake of clarity, most of the photoboards in this chapter are shot in simple surroundings staged for the static camera. Later, we'll see how camera movement or movement by the players can be substituted for cutting. For now, the camera is locked down and the photoboard sequences represent multiple camera angles that have been edited together.

POSITION ONE

Face-to-Face

The most basic positioning of two people in conversation is facing each other with their shoulders parallel. The first option is to frame the subjects in profile, as shown in the first six panels.

Compositionally, this staging allows for powerful subject oppositions. In this setup we do not get to see much of the players' expressions unless the composition is very tight (frame 6). If individual CUs are used the camera is usually repositioned for reverse OTS shots, although individual profile CUs are certainly possible.

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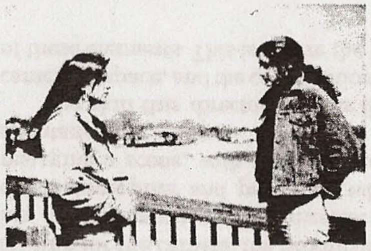

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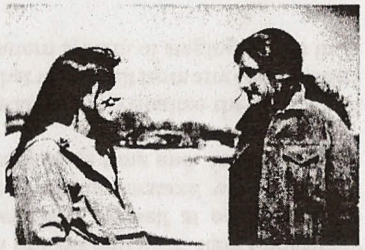

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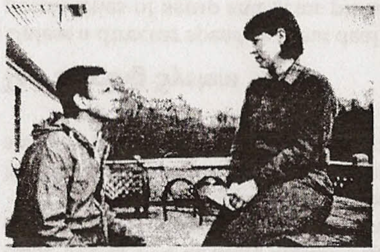

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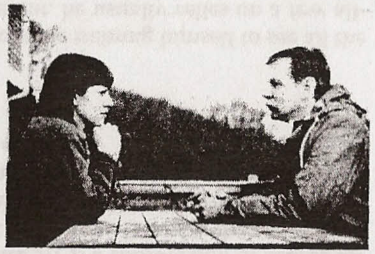

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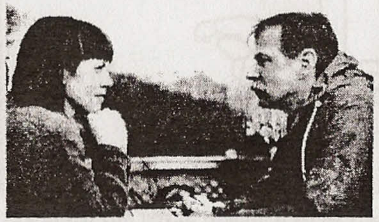

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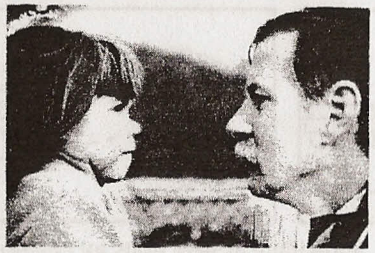

POSITION ONE

OTS

This next series shows the classic shot, reverse shot pattern in over-the-shoulder framings. These might be the logical follow-up shots to the profile stagings on the previous page. Though OTS shots are usually shot as matched pairs maintaining consistent lens and framing choices, mixed pairs can be edited together. In a continuous exchange of dialogue, however, matched pairs are more commonplace.

In tight framings there are two major strategies for the OTS shots. Frames 3 and 4 include the foreground subject's entire head in the frame. In frames 5 and 6 virtually one third to one half of the frame is blocked off, strongly isolating the player facing us.

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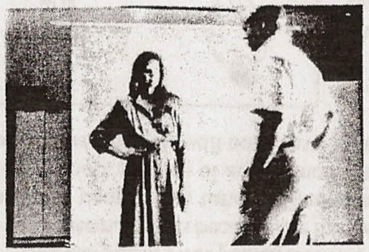

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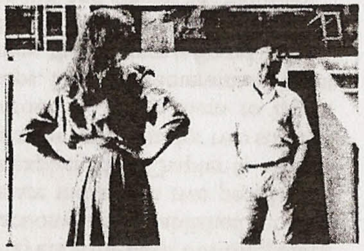

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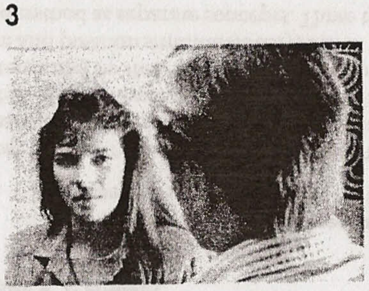

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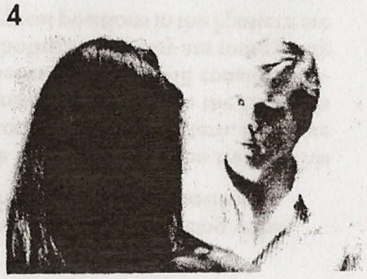

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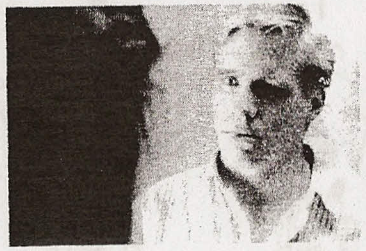

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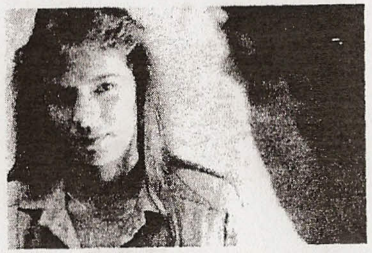

POSITION ONE

LONG LENS OTS

In the next series of OTS shots (frames 1–6), still using Position One staging, the focal length of the lens begins at 120mm and is increased to 200mm. The results are easy to see. Notice that for the first time the framing device of the face is a true over-the-shoulder shot since we see the shoulder and neck of the framing subject. This combination of lens and tight framing produces a more intimate feeling than would be obtained with a wider lens.

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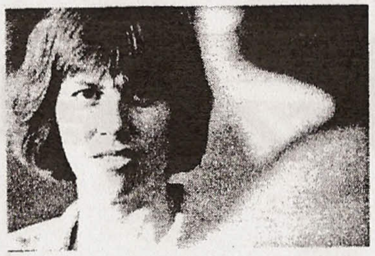

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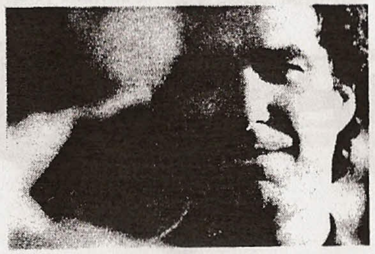

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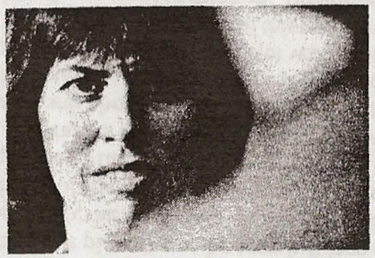

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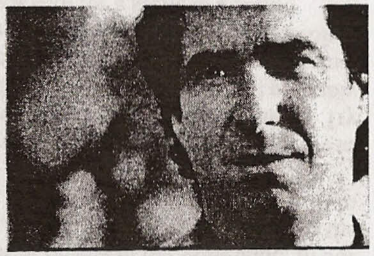

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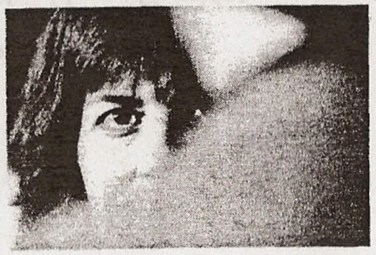

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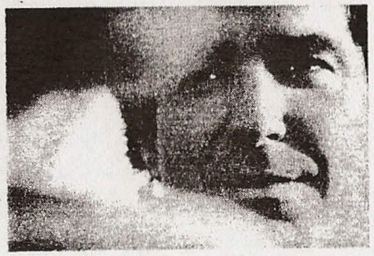

POSITION ONE

LOW-ANGLE REVERSE SHOTS

Another version of the shot, reverse shot pattern of Position One is seen in this next series, which can be described as over-the-hip shots. These are dynamic, low-angle positions that tend to put the subjects in an adversarial relationship. Frames 1 and 2 are only slightly low-angle and do not separate the subjects as much as do frames 3 and 4, which are shot from a camera height of 3 ft. In frames 5 and 6, the focal length of the lens is increased (100mm) to lose focus on the foreground framing subject, thus emphasizing the background figure.

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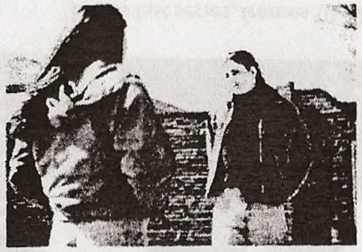

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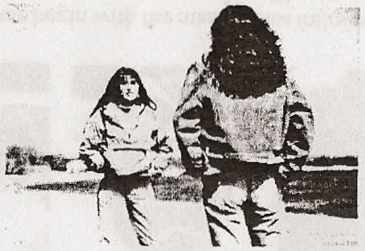

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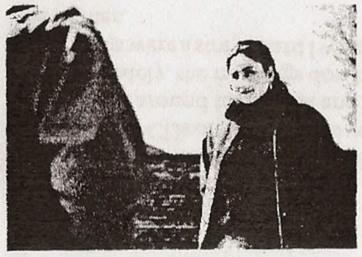

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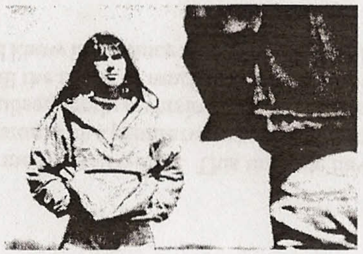

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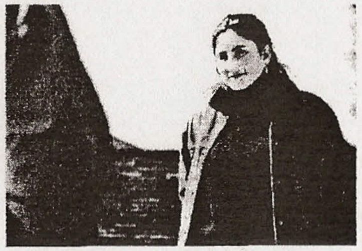

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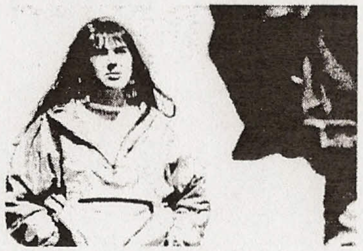


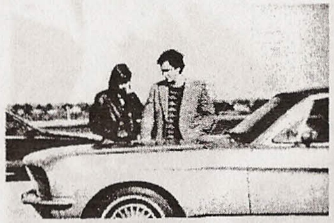
POSITION TWO

Shoulder-to-Shoulder

This basically frontal positioning offers more options than most others because players can be seen full face or in profile in the same shot. In our example the subjects are faced forward, looking at a road map spread on the hood of the car, but when the couple speaks to one another they turn in profile to the camera.

Frames 1-3 are straightforward two-shots. Any of these could serve as a master shot, although frame 1 is somewhat wide for a conversation. Try to imagine a dialogue scene as you look at these frames. You will probably find that the size of the shot will affect what type of scene comes to mind. You can probably think of this as a reverse exercise since you will most often face the opposite situation: imagining a shot for a scene in a script.

1



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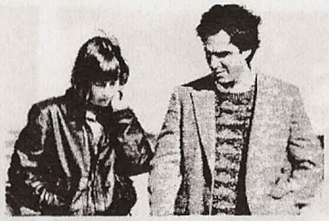

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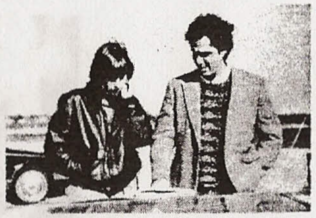

Frames 4, 5 and 6 illustrate an actual sequence. We begin with the profile two-shot in frame 4 and move in to profile close-ups in frames 5 and 6. The camera would be moved in for the CUs, but it would still be directed along the same angle of view as for the open two-shot. (In my opinion, this use of CUs tends to break up the scene, though in the continuity style it's a perfectly legitimate cut.)

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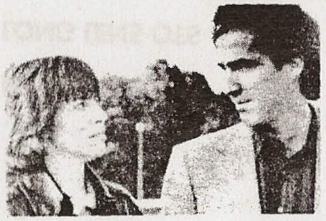

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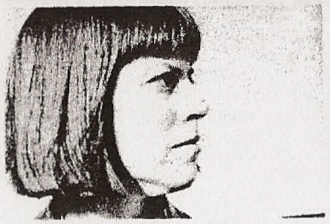

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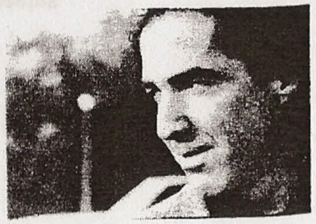
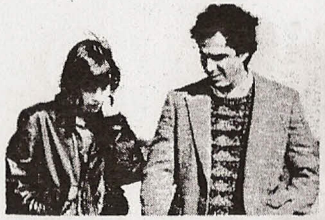


In frames 7-9 we open with the medium two-shot. This time we have replaced the CUs of the previous version with a profile two-shot by moving the camera around to the side and subsequently reversing to the OTS shot. Unfortunately, the framings don't fill the frame as much as I would like to see. If this were a storyboard I would know in advance that the shots should be tighter.

7



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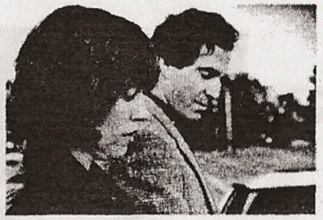

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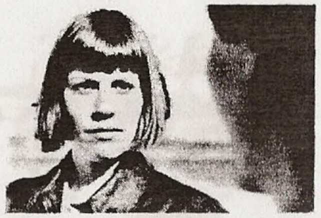
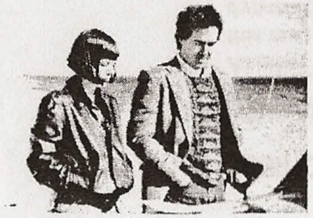


In this last series, frames 10-12, we begin with the master shot followed by two close-ups. This time we open with an angular two-shot. The camera is moved to the side for the shot, reverse shot CUs. Compare these with the two profile CU shots we used earlier in frames 5 and 6. Notice that these newer CUs give a stronger sense of presence. This happens because each subject in the CU is looking in our (the camera's) direction—in a sense, including us in the scene.

10



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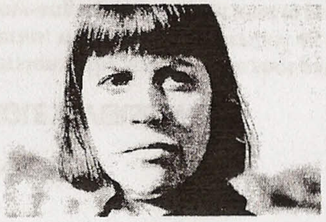

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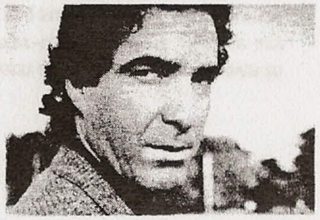


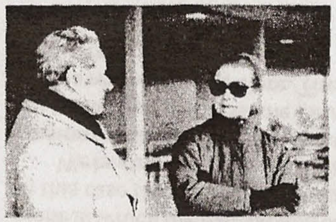
POSITION THREE

This basic staging deploys the figures at an angle of 90 degrees. This is a compromise between the parallel shoulder arrangement of Position One and the shoulder-to-shoulder arrangement of Position Two. It is a more casual pose, not one you would expect to see if the couple were arguing or having an intimate conversation. The looser relationship allows the couple to look away from one another and vary their head positions.

In the angular two-shot shown in frames 1 and 2 the player facing the camera is in the favored position. This type of setup is similar to the OTS shots, and we expect to see a reverse of the player in the secondary position.

The head-on two-shot in frames 3 and 4 puts the players on an equal basis and so is the logical choice for a master shot if no close-ups or reverses are used. The alternative is to have the player in the secondary position turn towards the camera to obtain the equivalent of a reverse shot. As with any of the "I" patterns, OTSs and CUs can be used, although this tends to force the subjects into the more direct relationship of Position Two. One way of maintaining the angular positioning is by composing the two-shot very tightly and closing the space between the subjects. A shot, reverse shot version of this is shown in frames 5 and 6.

1



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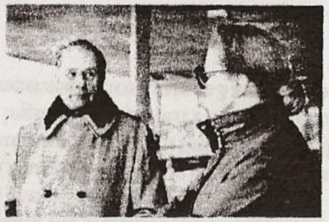

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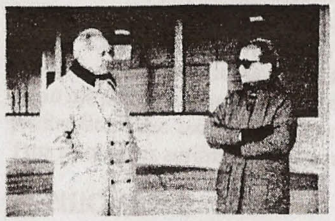

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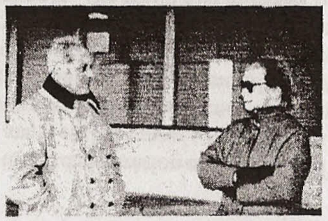

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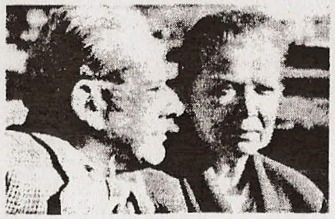

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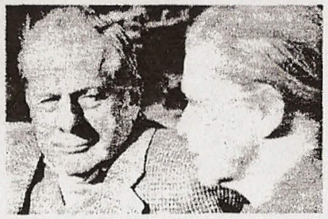


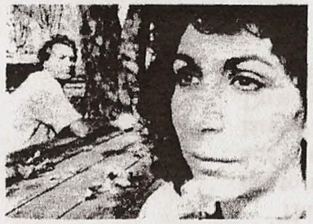
POSITION FOUR

Beginning with Position Four we will look at stagings that create tension. In all cases this is due to the absence of eye contact between the players. In this series, the woman has turned from her partner, and the sense of separation is clear. This type of framing puts the viewer in a privileged position because we can see what the man cannot: the woman's reactions to his words.

Staging in depth in this way clearly places us in a closer relationship with one of the players. This is a definite choice of point of view that depends on the basic frontality of the scene. A reverse shot in this staging would drastically alter the point of view. If a more neutral relationship with the players is desired, there are other, probably better, stagings that can be used. As you can see, I have not used any reverse shots with this staging, which is inherently frontal.

In frame 1 the two-shot is composed in depth with a 30mm lens. The result is that slight distortion can be seen in the foreground player and the player in the background seems far away even though the players are only separated by the length of a picnic table.

1



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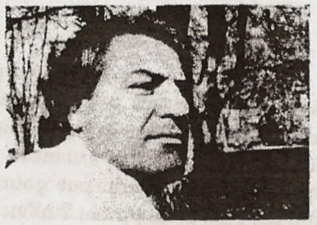

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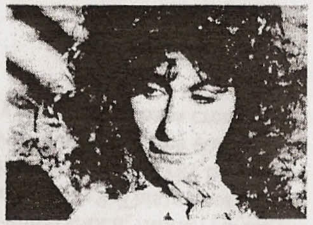
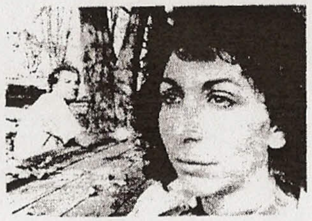


Frames 4, 5 and 6 present a slightly modified alternative. The opening two-shot is looser, allowing the viewer some breathing room. The close-up in frame 5 also has been made wider (almost a medium shot) to give the frame a more relaxed feeling. Frame 6 shows a lower angle close-up. Compare the feeling of this frame to frame 3 above. The result of these changes is that the sequence is less insistent.

4



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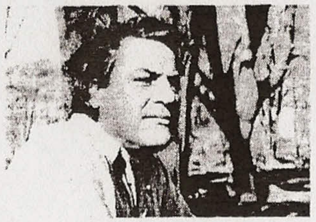

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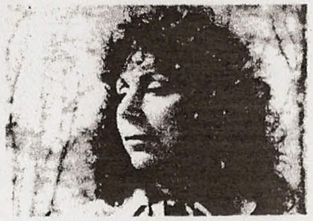
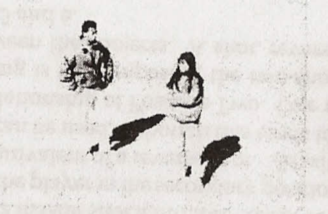


POSITION FIVE

This is another staging that tends toward separation and tension. The body language of the woman's folded arms and the man's hands in his pockets or on his hips contributes to the interpretation of the scene. The framing can be used to emphasize the dramatic situation but is essentially neutral as to which actor is dominant. In the version shown, the woman refuses to look at the man. This, of course, is a type of control, and we can imagine that the man is placed in a position of weakness. We could just as easily propose a scene in which the man is confronting the woman with some lie she has told. In this case the man would be in the dominant role.

We begin with a high angle in frame 1. This view usually serves to create tension and isolation. The open surroundings contribute to this feeling. The cut to the two-shot in frame 2 is a legitimate edit, but I would prefer to show the players separated more. The next sequence (frames 3 and 4) shows a pair of reversed angular shots.

1



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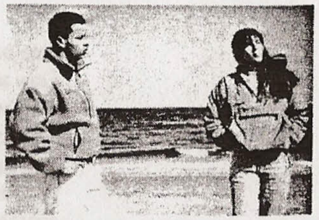

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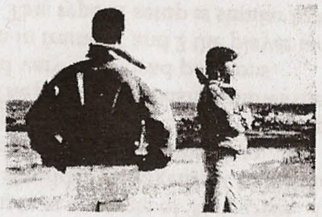

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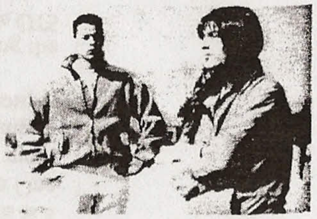
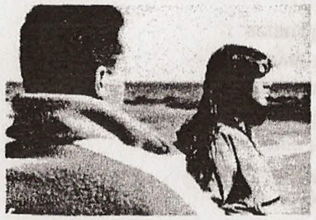


In frames 5 and 6 we see a pair of tighter reverse shots. In these shots the framing combines a CU framing and a medium shot. The obvious difference is that frame 6 features both players' faces, while frame 5 is really an OTS shot.

If it is necessary to withhold the woman's expression we could frame the scene from the opposite side of the action in the previous frames. In this case we will be crossing the line of action.

This staging would open with the high-angle shot in frame 7, cross the line to frame 8, and cross the line one last time to frame 9. This type of staging and shot sequence is not at all typical of the continuity style, but that is largely due to the unchallenged orthodoxy of the 180-degree convention. Do not automatically rule out a shot simply because it means crossing the line. If it works, use it.

5



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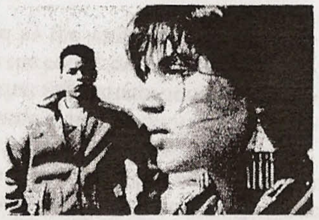

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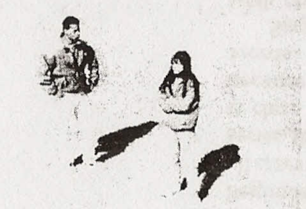

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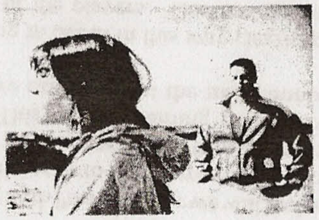

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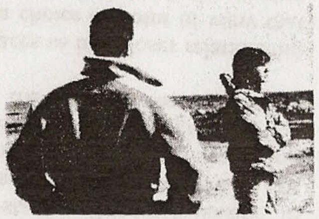
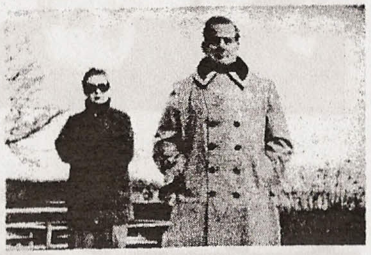


POSITION SIX

This dramatic staging withholds eye contact for much of its effect. The value of this staging is its clarity, related in a sense to the shoulder-to-shoulder two-shot. The difference is that in-depth staging encourages us to identify with the foreground player. My feeling about this type of setup is that overcutting destroys the unity of the scene.

In frame 1 we see a wide shot of the setup, but frame 2 is probably the best distance for a master shot. In this type of staging the background player has room to move, pace, turn around or leave the frame momentarily, while the foreground player is restricted to a smaller space if both players are to remain within the frame. Frames 3 and 4 reveal the way in which identification can be controlled by placing us in an intimate relationship with the man. If cutting is used, the pair of close-ups in frames 5 and 6 retain the feeling of separation.

1



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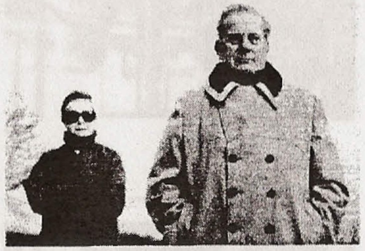

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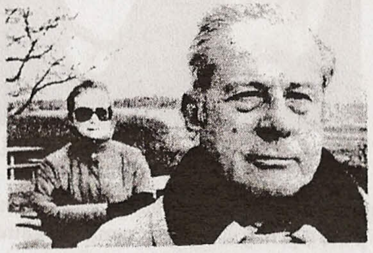

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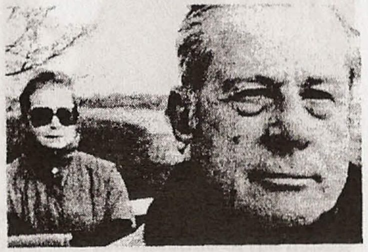

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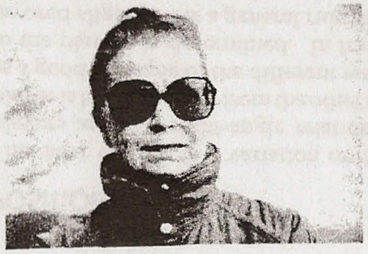

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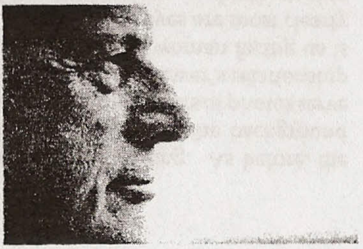
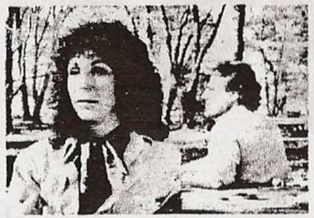


POSITION SEVEN

With this staging we continue the deployment of players who do not make eye contact. Because both players are looking offscreen in different directions, the viewer's attention is divided between the background and the foreground players. This produces an offhanded, relaxed dramatic situation. Notice that the background player is looking past the foreground player. This directs the viewer's attention to the foreground player and unifies the shot.

Consider this series a comparison of close-ups. The middle close-up of the man is a good example of how shot size contributes to the spatial unity of the sequence. Learn to move your eyes over the images without studying them. Reading a storyboard is a matter of editing with your eyes. This becomes easier when you have an actual scene to imagine.

1



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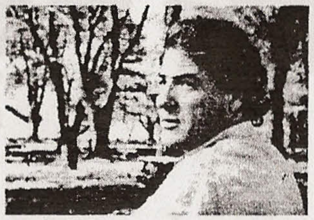

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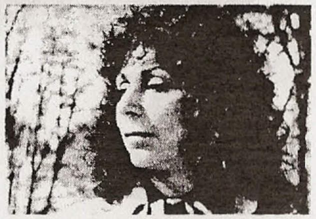

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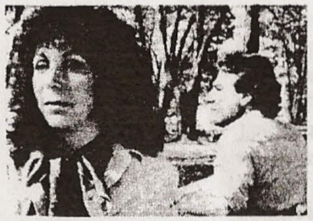

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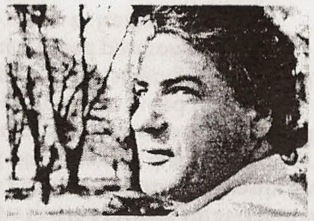

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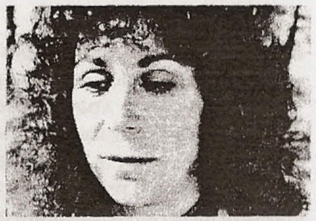

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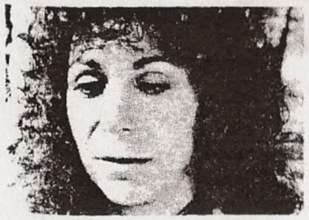

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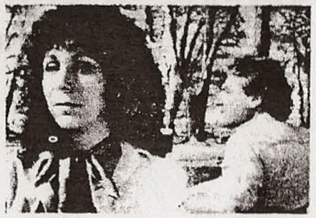

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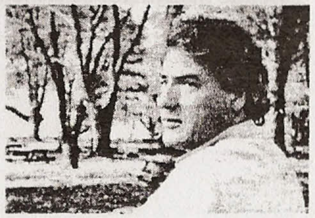
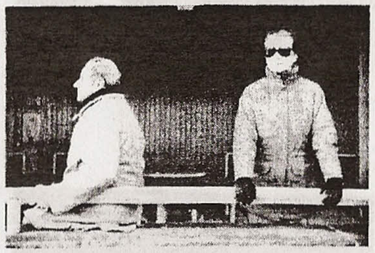


POSITION EIGHT

This next version is a variation on the previous staging. As before, the players are in a right-angle relationship, but this time the background player is looking away from the other player. The three pairs of photos serve as a good example of the different ways in which the viewer's relationship to the players is determined. In frames 1 and 2 the woman facing us is favored slightly. As a general rule the player whose eyes are most clearly seen will dominate the shot. As we have seen before, in-depth staging encourages our indentification with the foreground player. Finally, the angular shots in frames 5 and 6 tend to balance the attention of the figures since both players are turned away from the camera.

1



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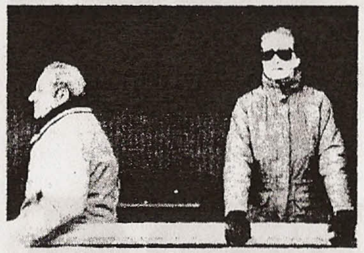

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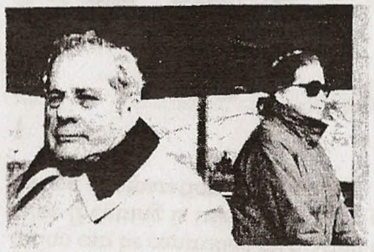

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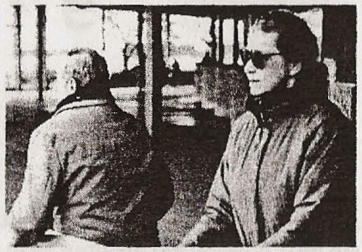

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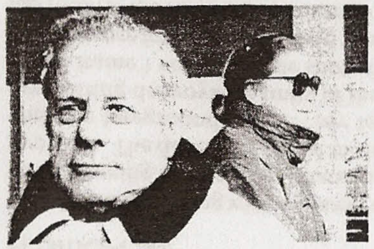

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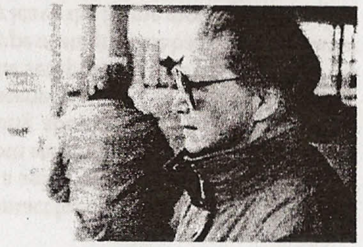
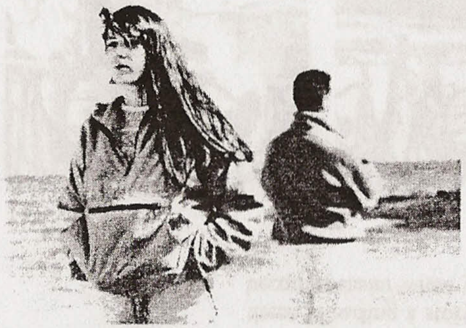


POSITION NINE

This series features a staging that has the players so completely opposed that it seems as though it belongs in a musical comedy. This is only true if we imagine that the players are aware of each other and have taken a defiant stance. We can change this very easily if we imagine that the scene is set on a railroad platform and that the man has been hired to follow the woman. The man moves into the crowd and stands with his back to her. In this case the staging would be suited to a thriller, not a comedy.

Comparing the stagings in frames 1 through 4 you will see that the somewhat stylized positioning in frames 1 and 2 is less artificial-looking as we move closer in frames 3 and 4.

1



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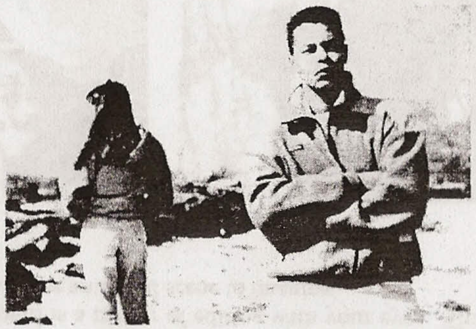

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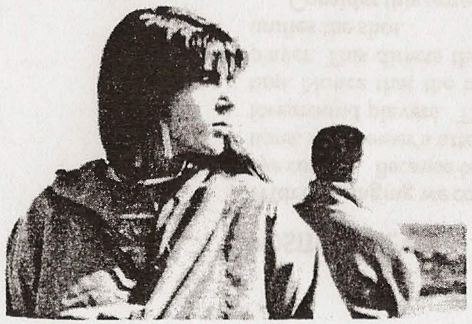

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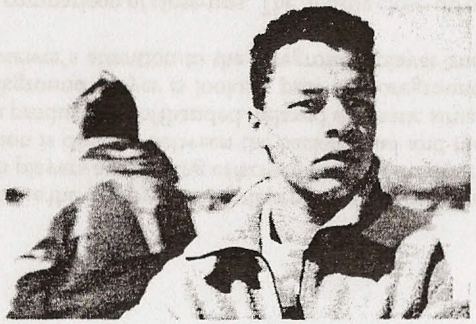
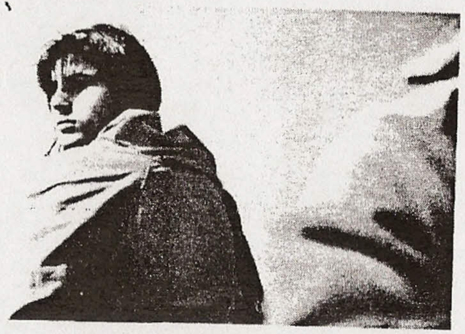


Personally, I find frames 5-10 to be the most successful framings of this position. All six frames are evocative for the reason that the head turn indicates that the featured player is listening to something offscreen. In a sense this is an aural version of the cut on the look.

5



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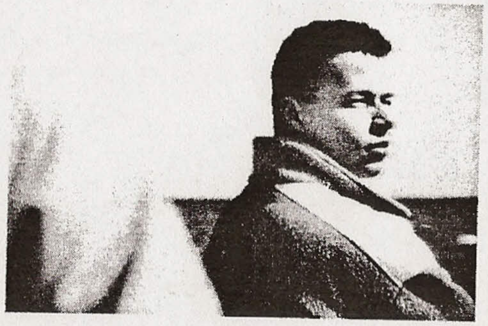

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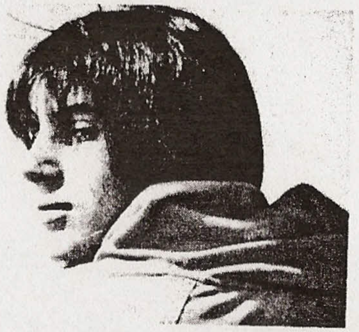

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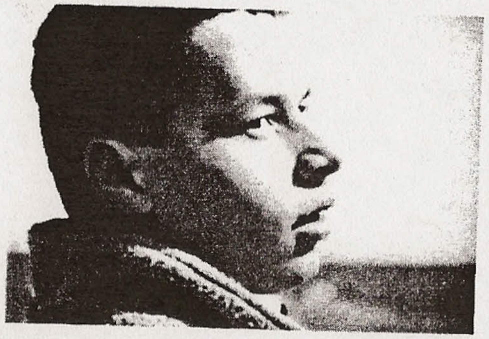

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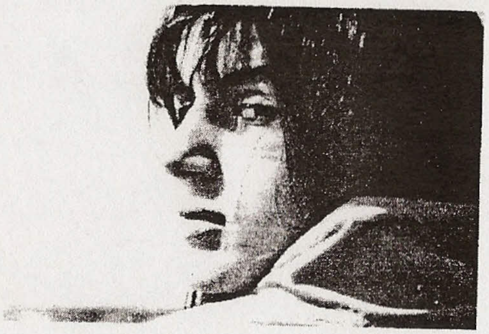

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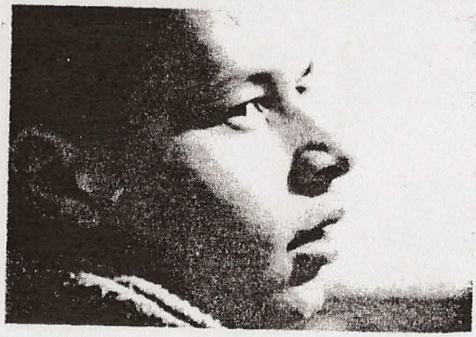

POSITION TEN

The following three sequences record a staging in which the players are positioned at different heights. This usually means that tight two-shots are framed as up or down angles, though in wider framings this is not necessary. No reverse shots are shown in this series, though that is certainly a workable variation.

Spend some time looking at the shot flow in these sequences. Try "reading" the frames from right to left or diagonally across to produce different combinations. Any of these shots works with any other, but each presents a slightly different feeling and spatial sense. Developing the skill to predict relationships between shots in a sequence will help you in composing individual shots.

There are innumerable variations on two-player stagings that we have not looked at, but nearly all the possibilities will share the essential physical and emotional qualities of at least one of the positions illustrated. The point is not to memorize every conceivable arrangement of player and camera, but rather to sharpen your awareness of the relationship of the elements from which the dramatic qualities of a shot are composed.

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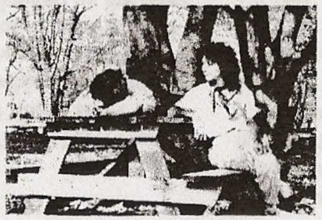

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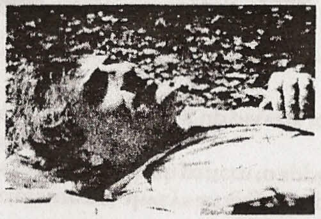

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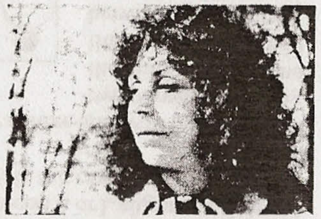

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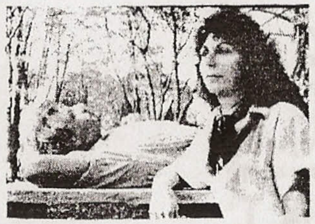

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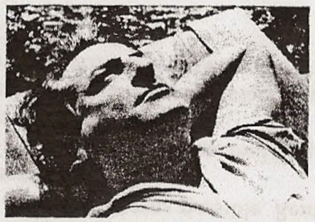

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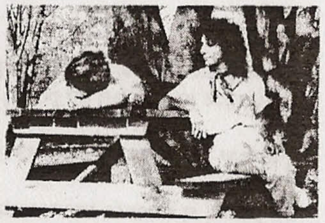

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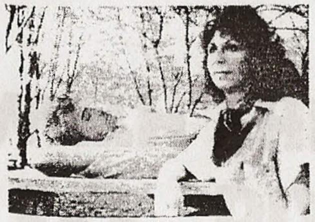

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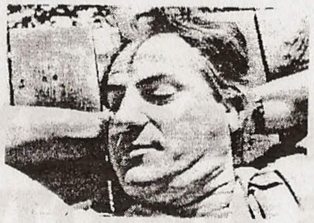

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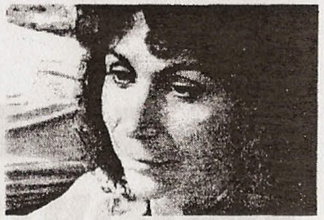

10 DIALOGUE STAGING WITH THREE SUBJECTS

Now that we have looked at the 10 positions for the "I" pattern, we can add a third player to our stagings, which will make the "A" and "L" patterns possible. Remember, our system is based on three assumptions:

- The I pattern is the simplest building block. It is found in the A and L patterns.
- Patterns determine camera placement based on the line of action.
- Position determines the placement of players in the frame based on the basic staging pattern.

The Difference Between A and L Patterns

Because actors are not always arranged in precise A or L alignment, it is not always easy to decide which pattern to apply. In this case camera placement is the determining factor.

For example, when lining up players for a three-shot you may find that two players are facing the third player. If the third player is framed between the other two, then the staging arrangement is the A pattern. If the third player is lined up outside the other two players, then the arrangement is the L pattern. This aspect of staging is called *opposition*. Figure 10.1 shows the various types of oppositions that can be obtained.

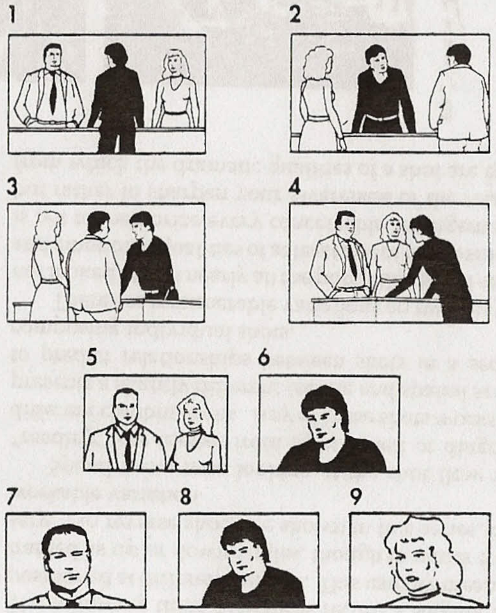

Figure 10.1: Frames 1 and 2 show one subject opposed by two others. Since the lone figure in black is flanked by the other two, this is an A pattern. Frames 3 and 4 show the alternative setup for the three-shot in which the lone subject is isolated to one side. This is an L pattern. Frames 5 and 6 illustrate the type of opposition that can be obtained if we break down the three-shot into a two-shot opposed by a close-up. In frames 7–9 all the players are equally opposed in close-ups.

The Basic Patterns and Positions

In the two-player stagings of the previous chapter, the models in the photoboards were arranged in o[illegible]ace. Having established the basic positions in those examples we can [illegible]k at stagings that are less precisely aligned.

By adding the additional player we have increased the number of pattern and position combinations enormously. We do not need to look at all of them since we know that any combination can be reduced to the 10 positions in the I pattern that we have already seen. Conversely, we can reverse the process and construct dozens of three-player stagings from the 10 positions. This idea is shown in Figure 10.2.

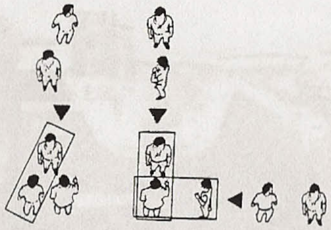

Figure 10.2: Here we see the boxed portion of the A and L patterns being replaced by the two alternate positions in the I pattern at the top of the figure. The box could just as easily be drawn horizontally or diagonally as long as two players are enclosed in the box.

Before looking at the photoboard examples, we can review the line of action as it pertains to three-player scenes. Figure 10.3 shows a typical staging situation in the A pattern.

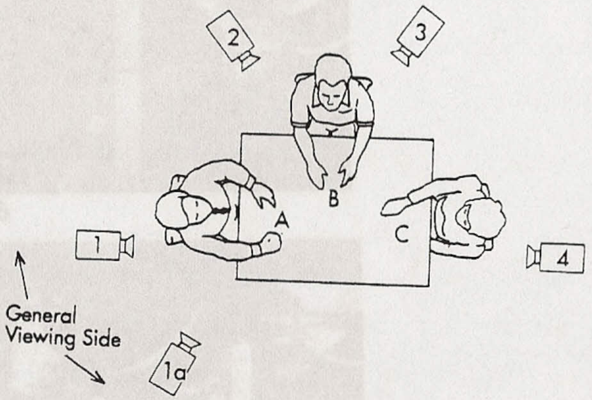

Figure 10.3: In this A pattern staging I first determined the general angle of view. Although the camera can move 360 degrees around the players, the scene should have a basic viewing orientation. The circumstances vary with the scene, but in this case the scene opens with a view from camera 1. The dialogue begins between players a and c. This establishes the line between them. Camera positions 1 and 2 for OTS shots are placed *outside* the line. Now player b speaks to player c, establishing a new line between them. On what side of the line do we place the camera? This is where the general view comes in. Rather than set up a new camera position *outside* of players a and b, as we did for players a and c, we stay on the same side of player a. Now when player b speaks to player c we stay on the same side of player b and use camera position 2. What about camera position 3? Do we actually need this angle? With the number of angles we already have, it may be unnecessary. This example can be handled in other ways, but the general idea is to reuse positions when possible rather than constantly creating new ones whenever a new line is established.

In the following examples we will consider some common and some not so common staging situations with three players.

A Pattern (Version One)

Here is the same staging situation we just looked at in Figure 10.3. Frame 1 is the only combination of setup and staging for this pattern that permits us to see all the subjects clearly. This makes it the obvious choice for a master shot.

In the first series of frames (2-5), single shots (medium shots and a close-up) are used after the opening master shot. This produces two results. First, it tends to fragment space, and secondly, it prevents us from seeing the player speaking and the players who are listening in one shot. Compare this with the next sequence.

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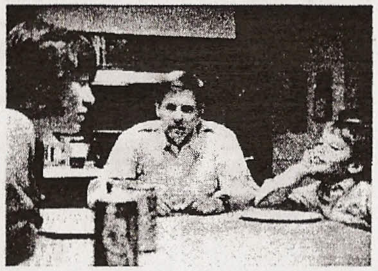

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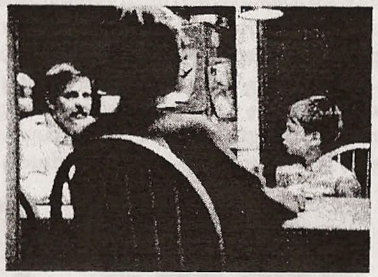

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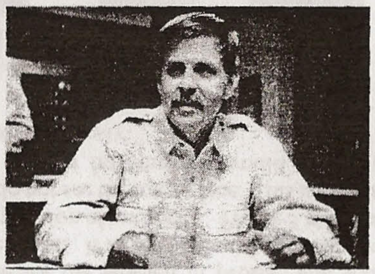

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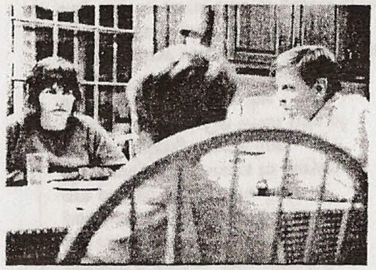
In this next series of six frames (6-11), OTS shots have been used to unify space. After the establishing shot, an entire conversation can be comfortably handled in OTS shots and an occasional three-shot or two-shot to vary the rhythm. As you can see, the OTS shots are framed in the same way we would handle the staging if there were only two players. The several OTS variations in the I pattern introduced in the last chapter all apply to the staging we are looking at here.

6



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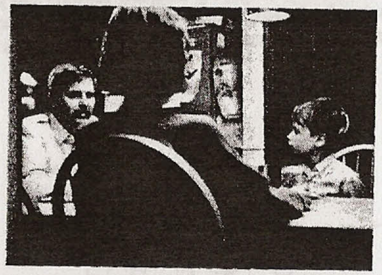

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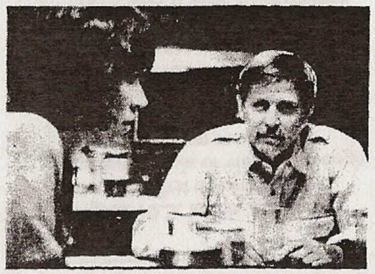

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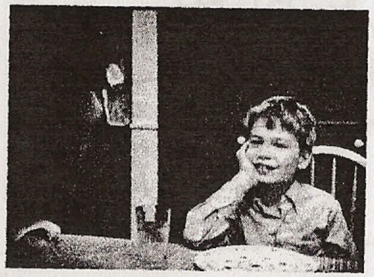

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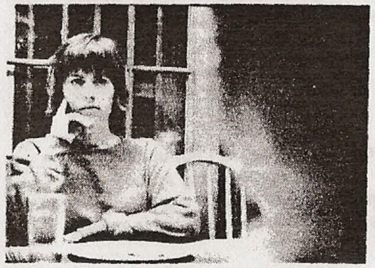

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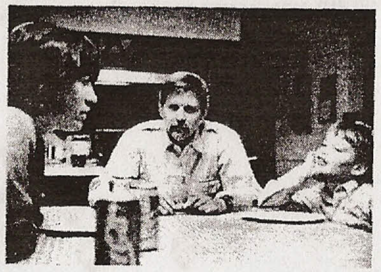

A Pattern (Version Two)

This "A" pattern staging is a direct positioning of opposed figures as might be expected in an interview or meeting in which the parties are on a formal basis. Again this is a very common staging position whether the players are standing or sitting. Notice that the man's sight line in frame 1 is very close to the camera, placing him in a direct relationship with the viewer. In frame 2 we see the women in profile, and their relationship to the viewer is deferential. It looks as though the women are the listeners and the man is in a position of authority. Frame 3 preserves this relationship even though we do not see the man's face. This is because a down shot of this type is not the type of framing we would expect if either woman had anything important to say.

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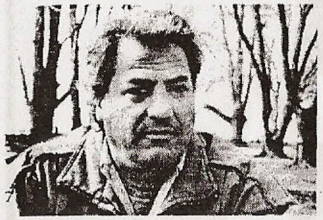

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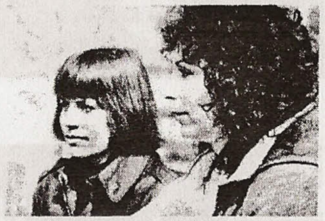

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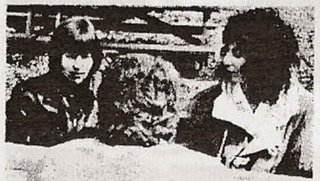
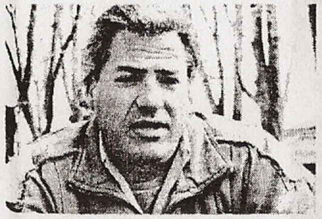


Compare frames 4-6 with the last series. Frame 4 places the man in a very direct relationship with the viewer. Personally, I do not like the rendition of space in frames 4 and 5. Frame 5 was shot with a 40mm lens, but it looks too wide to me. What do you think about frame 6? Now look at both sequences and compare the experience of "reading" them. Which sequence do you find the most successful in terms of shot flow? If you could substitute shots from one sequence for some in the other which ones would you choose?

4



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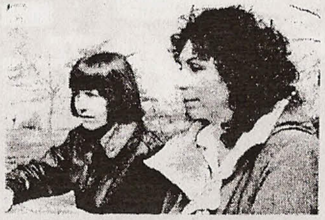

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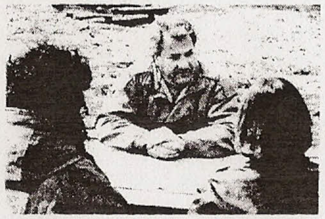
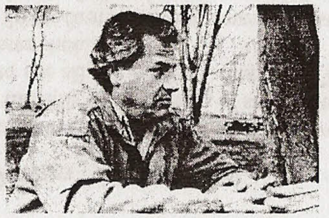


In this next series you can see how the man's presence is diminished when he is not in a frontal position. Before he was in command; now he is in a reactive position. If we started with a picture of the woman facing the camera followed by the profile shot of the man in frame 7, the woman would be in the position of authority.

7



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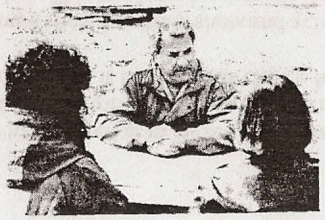

A Pattern (Version Two)

The two series of frames below are a good comparison of overlapped space and discontinuous space within a frame. Frame 10 in the top row is an OTS shot and includes some of the man from the previous shot. This is what is meant by *overlapping* space. The reverse CU shot in frame 11 does not include space from the previous shot and is therefore *discontinuous*. Overlapping ties together the scene space. At the same time, close-ups like the ones in frames 12 and 14 isolate a subject in a way that might be justified dramatically.

Notice how frames 11 and 13 serve as pivot shots directing our attention to the appropriate CU, frame 12 or 14. The direction of the man's look is the determining factor. Cutting on his head turn is a powerful editing cue.

One last point to be made is the importance of lens choice. These shots were all photographed in the 50 to 90mm range. The three shots, frames 9 and 13, were the widest at 50mm, and it might have been possible to bring the women in the foreground into a closer relationship with the man with a longer lens. Manipulating scene space with the lens is a powerful technique, but if used carelessly it can cause spatial inconsistencies.

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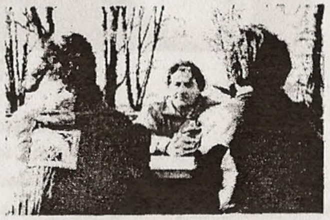

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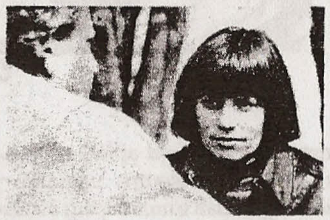

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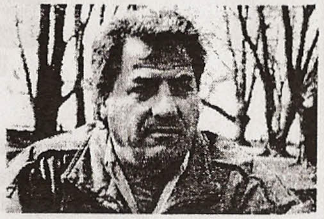

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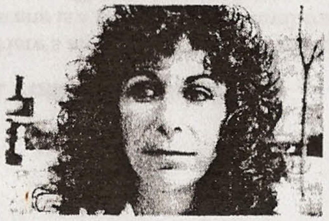

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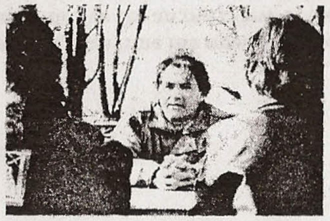

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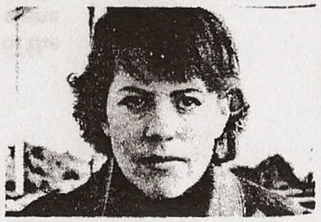

L Pattern (Version One)

Here we see a typical use of the L pattern. An angular view in frame 1 moves to a low-angle OTS shot in frame 2. Actually we are seeing a portion of the man's arm, not his shoulder, and it preserves the spatial unity of the opening shot. We then move to two close-ups. Notice the rhythm created in four frames by the change in shot size and camera angle. We become progressively tighter for three frames and then back out to a slightly wider CU in frame 4. Compare this with the next series.

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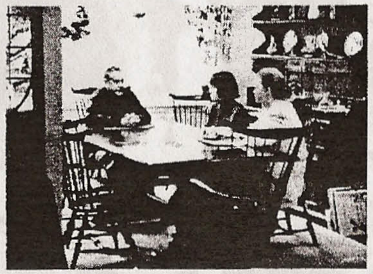

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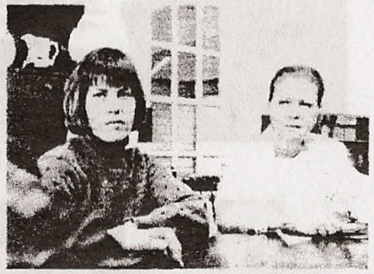

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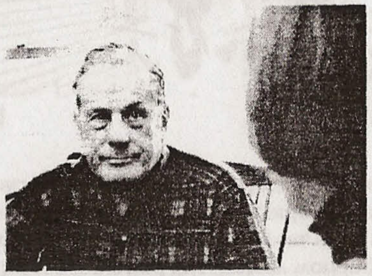

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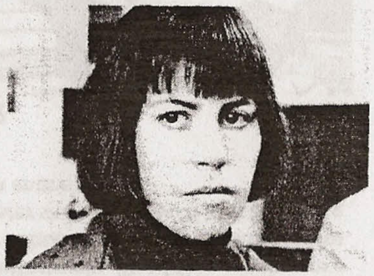
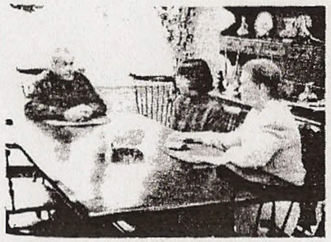


Frames 5-7 show how the sequence would look if we only used OTS three-shots. An entire conversation could be shot this way, though frame 6 could be a little tighter. Generally speaking this sequence has a more relaxed, stable feel than the previous version.

5



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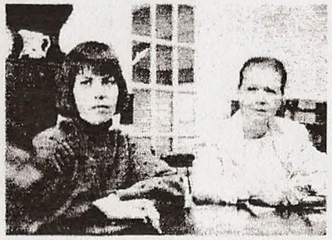

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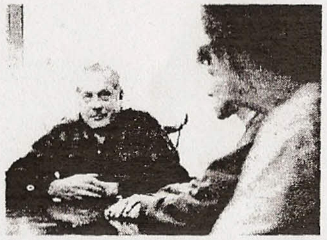
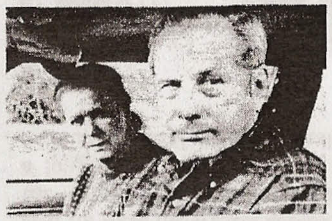


L Pattern (Version Two)

Here's another version of the L pattern. This time the opening shot of the scene is a two-shot. Not until frame 3 do we see an overview of the scene space. This is an interesting strategy for opening a scene—deliberately withholding the full context of the scene. We also see a typical use of the two-shot in frame 1. It is typical because the L pattern generally groups the two players on the long top of the L together. Almost always, the L seating or standing arrangement occurs when a single player is addressing two others.

1



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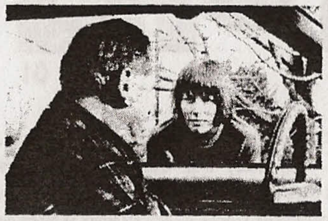

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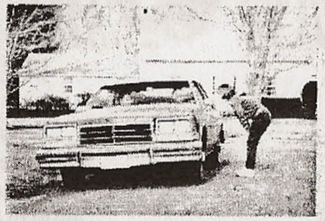
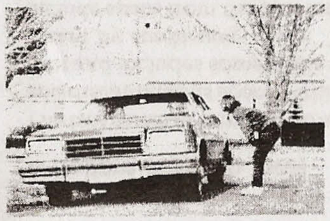


We can compare the use of the three-shot in this last series with the two-shot in the previous series. Both three-shots are OTS framings. An alternative three-shot is shown in the bottom row. One last point: The frames in all these series are necessarily small for presentation purposes. In a theater the subjects in these shots would appear considerably closer and more intimate.

4



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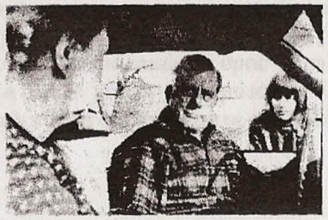

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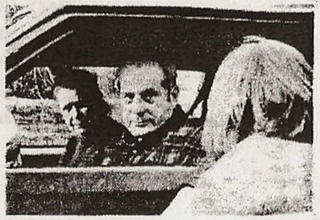

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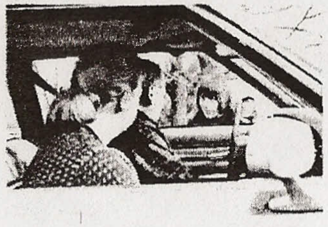
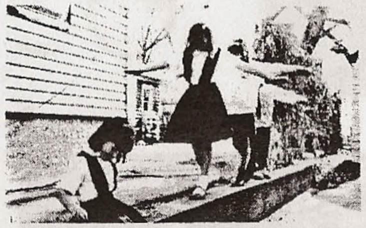


I Pattern

This is a simple version of a common staging. Once again we can see that the options for cutting tend toward shot, reverse shot patterns. If cutting is not used, we can employ more complex staging in depth, but quite often OTS shots, two-shots and close-ups are the best way to frame the action. In this series we find this strategy working effectively. By adding a dolly move and by repositioning the players, we have obtained many of the same angles seen in multiple shots using only the master shot. Later we'll look at staging techniques that use a master shot for an entire scene.

1



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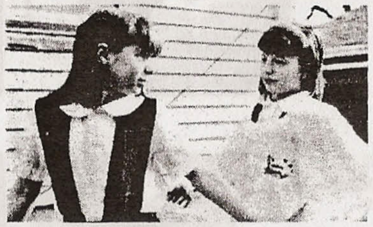

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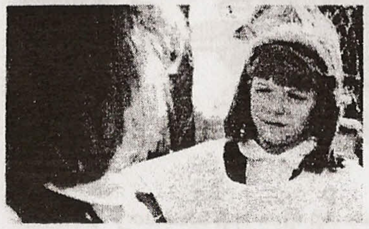

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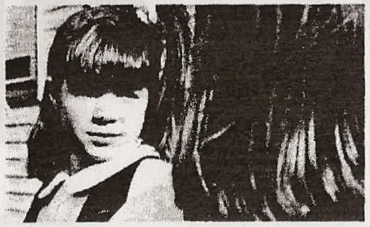

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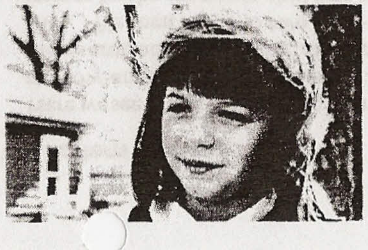

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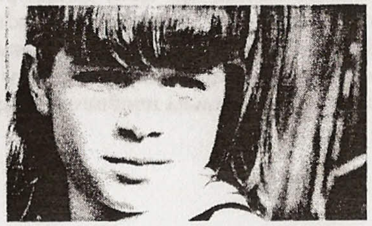

A Pattern (In-Depth Staging One)

This next series is an unusual staging of a dialogue sequence. I have included it as a study of in-depth staging and the use of lenses.

Frames 1-4 are straightforward stagings of the players. A line of action is established between the man and the two women. Respecting the line we can move to the low angle two-shot (frame 3) or the subsequent OTS shots of the women (frame 4), which establish a new line.

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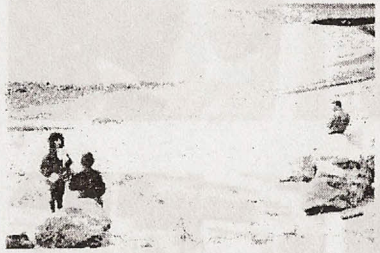

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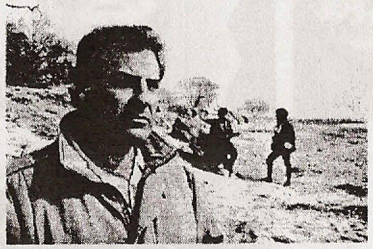

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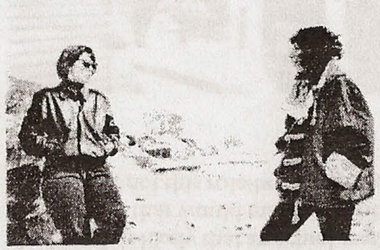

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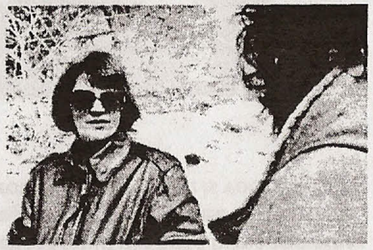

If we want to explore more fully the relationship between the man and the women we can use a pair of reverse shots. Here's how we might cross the line: We could open the scene with a medium shot of the man in frame 5. This could be followed by the man's head turn as he looks at the women in the foreground in frame 6. After several seconds the man will turn away, and we can cut to frame 7. Now we can cut to the two-shots or the OTS shots from the previous series. We also have the option of cutting to OTS shots on the *opposite* side of the women after frame 7.

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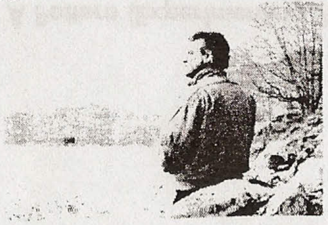

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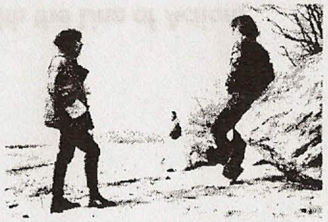

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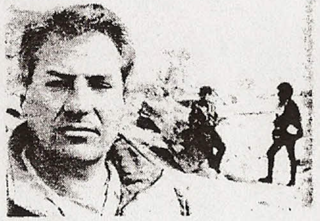

A Pattern (In-Depth Staging Two)

This staging in depth is a good example of the use of frontality. It has been designed to work without reverses or shots taken from the side. The camera is able to move all the way to the background to feature the women coming through the gate. After the establishing shot a scene staged this way might only use frames 2 and 3 for an entire conversation.

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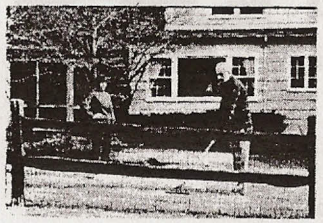

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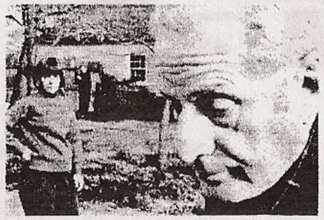

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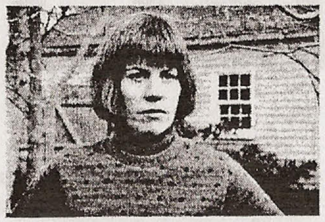
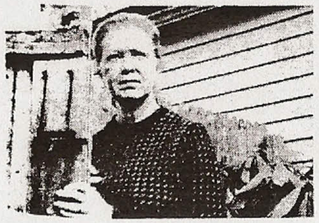


Frames 4-6 represent an alternative establishment of scene space. In this version the scene opens with the woman in the background. We are intrigued by her look and cut to the wider frame of the other two players in frame 5. This is a cut on the look, but it is not a POV shot. That would require a reverse angle. Finally, we widen all the way out in a wide establishing shot. This might serve as a dramatic pause in the middle of the scene or as the final shot.

4



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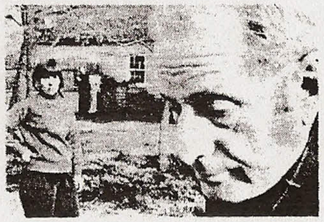

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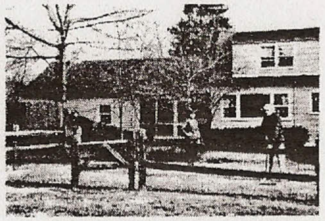

A Pattern (Experimenting With the Line of Action)

This A arrangement stages the players at different heights to obtain interesting angles. This is also an example of the unorthodox use of the line of action. Frames 1 and 2 establish the line in an unconventional manner by not basing it on the sight lines of the players. Frame 3 is a radical shift to a low-angle shot. But the scene geography was so clear in frame 1 that we remember where the boy on the railing was seated. Also the gun stock was deliberately included in the shot as a spatial signpost.

Frame 4 observes the new line established between the two boys on the railing, but in frame 5 we violate that line to get the shot of the boy standing on the ground. Frame 6 is a reestablishing shot and frame 7 again crosses the line. It is likely that an actual sequence would use head turns and other spatial cues that would make the editing pattern more cohesive. However, whether or not this rule-breaking approach works for you is your decision.

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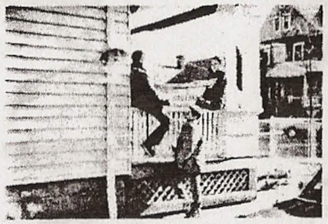

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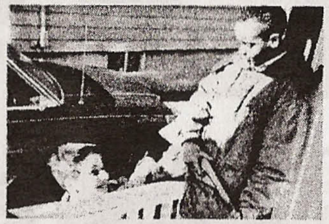

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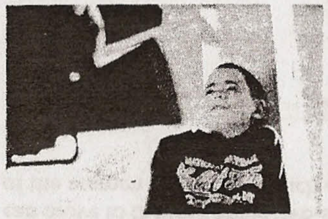

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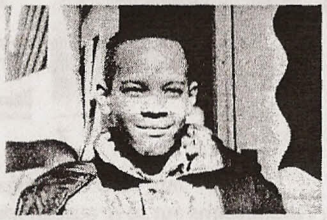

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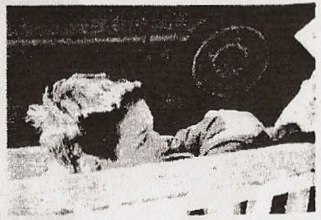

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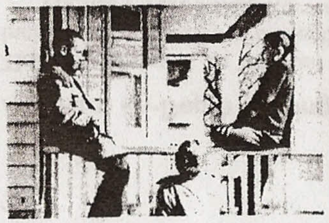

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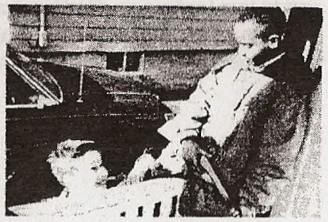

L Pattern (Version Three)

Here's an alternative treatment of the previous scene. In this version the cut on the look motivates many of the shots. We open with the three-shot in frame 1 (the third boy is hidden behind the railing). In frame 2 we cut to a reverse on the boy's head turn and look. We reverse again and move to the CU of the boy behind the railing looking back. In frame 4 the boy seated on the railing throws a pebble at the boy behind the railing who looks up in frame 5. We open up to a wide shot in frame 6 as the boy in the foreground calls to his two friends. This motivates the head turn of the boy in CU in frame 7. Throughout this sequence cutting has been motivated by either action or the cut on the look.

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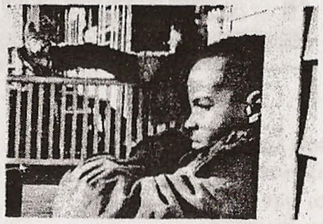

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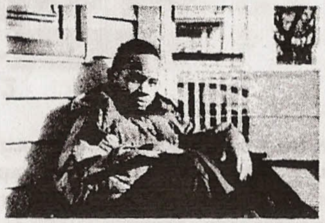

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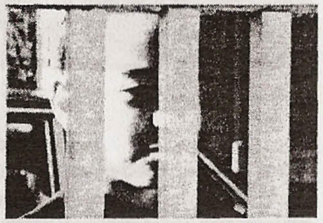

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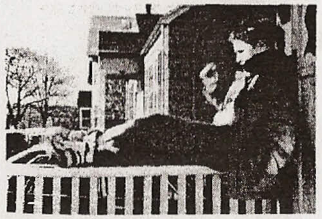

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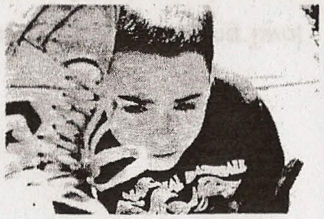

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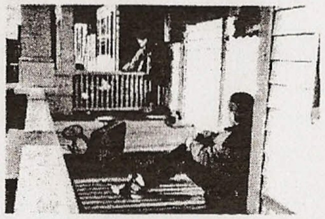

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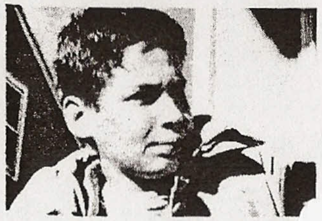

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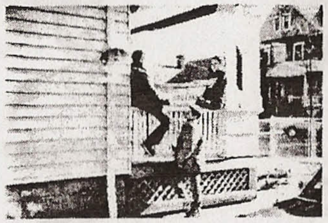

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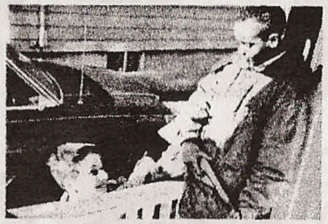

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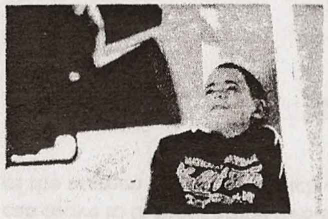

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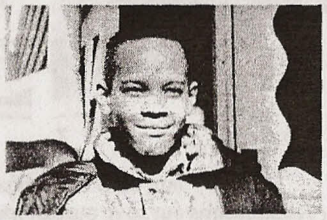

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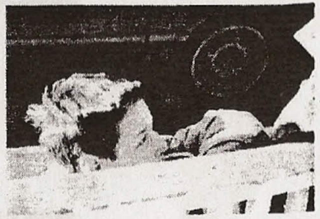

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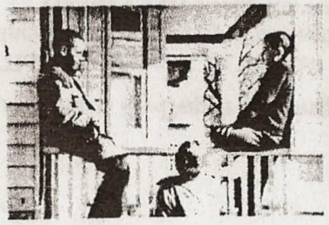

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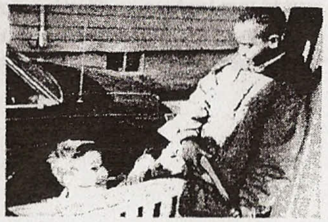

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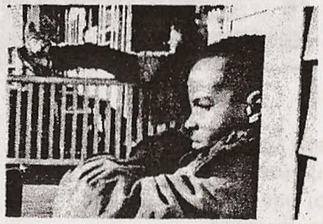

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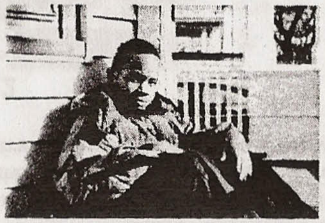

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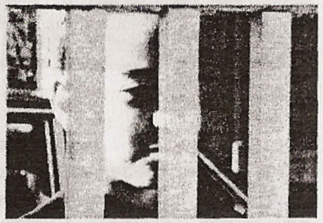

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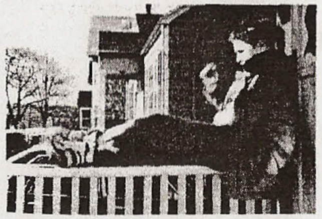

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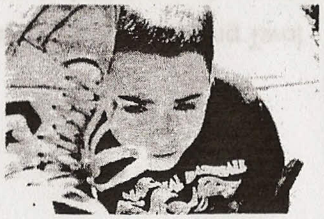

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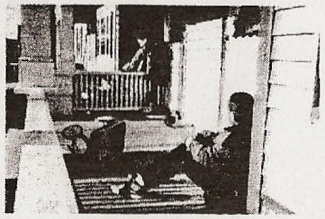

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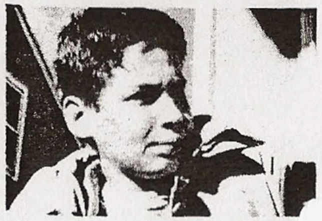

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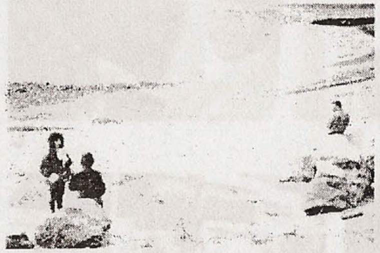

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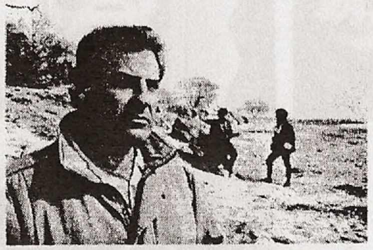

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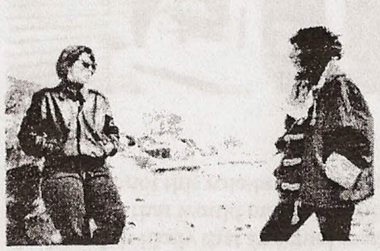

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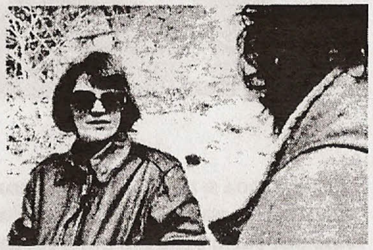

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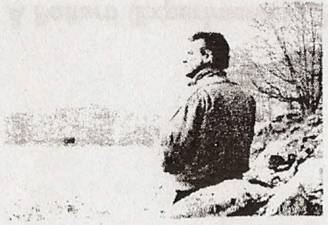

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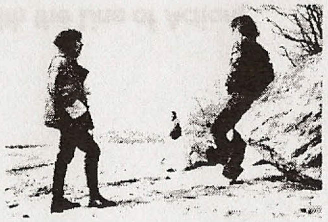

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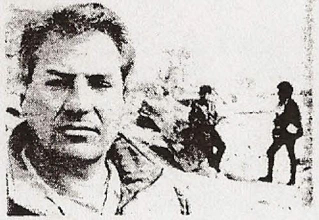

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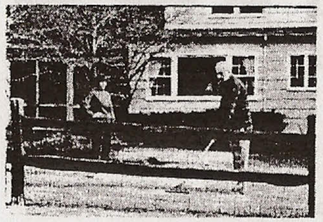

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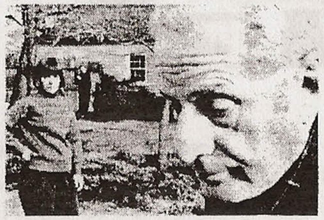

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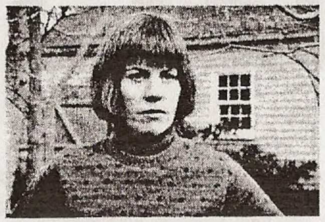

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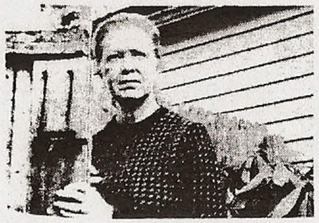

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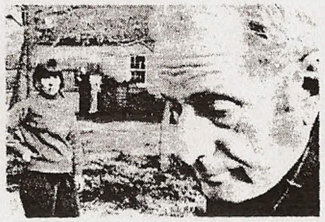

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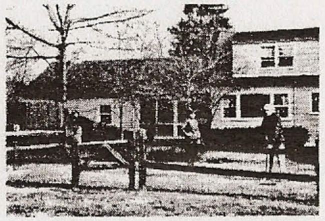


A Pattern (Version One)

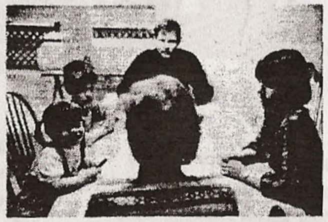
This time 5 players are seated in a circular arrangement. In this case it's possible to interpret the staging as an I, A or L arrangement depending on which players are being emphasized. The determination of the line of action, general viewing angle and staging pattern is your choice.

In this situation, the predominant viewing angle is over the shoulder of the grandmother shown in Figure 3. All the other players can be viewed from this position. Only one reverse is required to see the grandmother.

In this situation the line of action is extremely flexible. The reason is that the line of action is generally determined by the sight line of the players featured in the scene. As you can see, there are so many possible sight lines in this circular staging that we could easily establish a new line anywhere in the scene space.

Frames 2, 3 and 4 show an editing pattern in which subjects on the sides of the table are seen in angular shots, essentially from the point of view of the grandmother in frame 3. An unorthodox alternative is the side-by-side OTS shots of the grandmother in frames 5 and 6.

1



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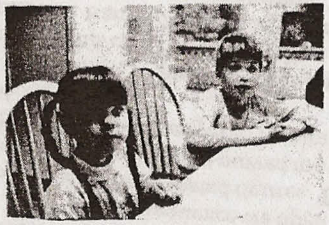

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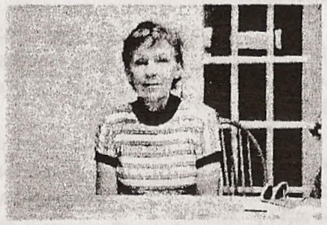

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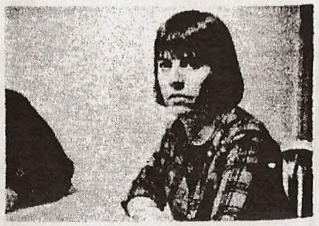

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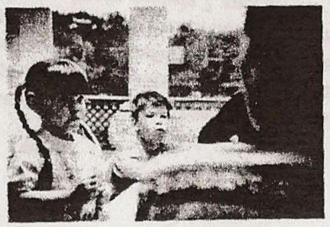

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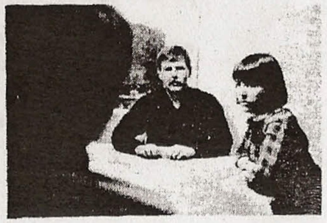


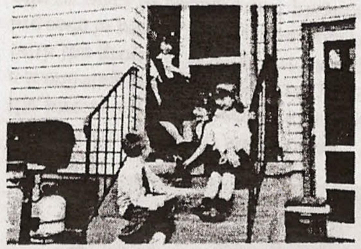
L Pattern

This is a good example of how a group of four players is treated in CUs, two-shots and three-shots. In this arrangement the two girls seated side-by-side clearly work as a two-shot and form the center of the scene. We can frame them as though they were one player opposite the boy, which means we are essentially working with the I pattern.

In frame 1 we set up the full group and move into a wide OTS three-shot in frame 2 (the fourth figure is partially visible). The OTS two-shot in frame 3, the two-shot in frame 4 and the medium single shot in frame 5 make up one simplified treatment of the scene, assuming that editing is called for.

To show how easy it would be to stage the scene for a single master shot, consider frame 2. If the camera were shifted a few feet to the right and tilted up, all four figures would be framed. In this arrangement the seated figures would be in profile and the standing figure would be in a frontal position.

1



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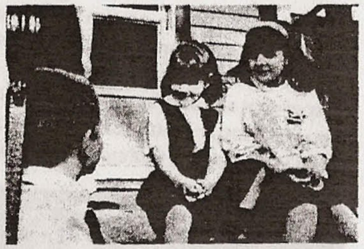

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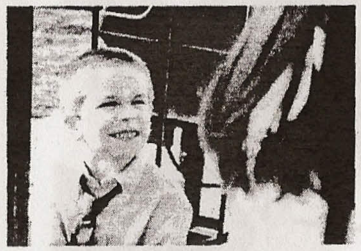

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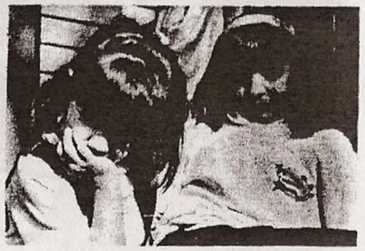

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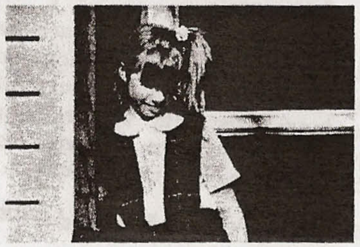

A Pattern (Version Two)

This next series of nine panels shows three staging possibilities comparing I, L and A pattern stagings. In the first example we have a classic three angle treatment of the I pattern. Panel 1 shows the head-on center position. From a closer position, but still located midpoint between the subjects, the camera is pivoted left and right to obtain panels 2 and 3.

In the second sequence we open up with the girl who is standing lined up to one side of the seated figures. This makes it the L pattern. At the same time the camera has been moved to a position almost along the line of action and outside the scene space. Two angular shots give us a single and a three-shot.

In this next sequence we have an A pattern interpretation of the same scene. In this case the girl standing is lined up so that she is flanked by the subjects in frames 7 and 8. In these two shots the line of action practically runs through the camera position.

Patterns can also be mixed. If you read the frames vertically, for instance, panels 1,4 and 7 shots from the I, L, and A patterns work together quite comfortably. The choice is essentially between symmetrical or asymmetrical framings. This is most obvious in the shot, reverse shot pattern.

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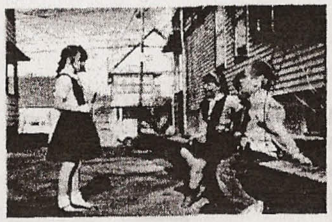

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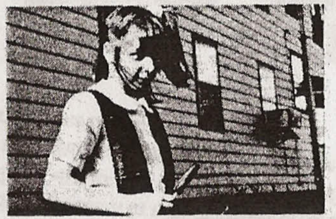

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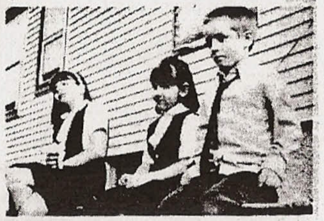

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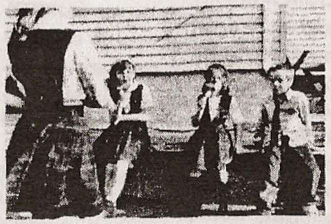

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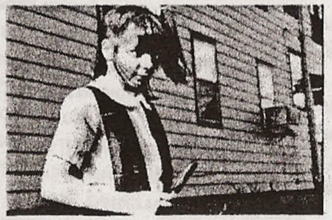

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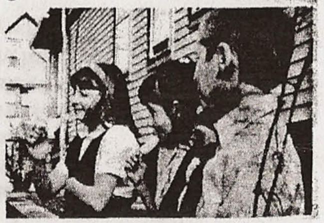

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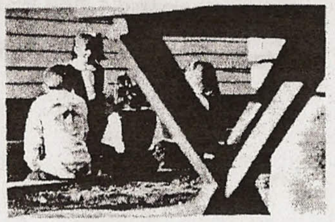

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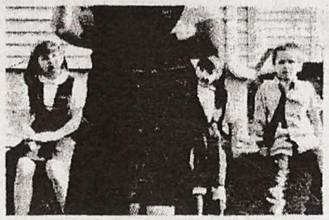

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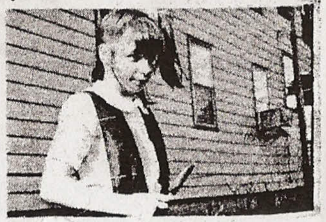
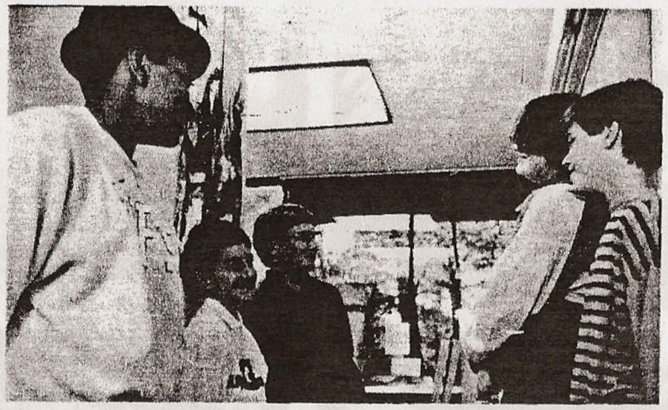


Frontal Positions for Single Setups

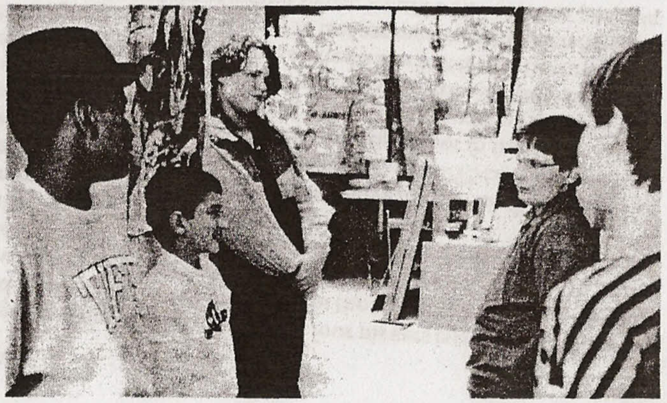
By now the various possibilities for staging two-, three- and four-or-more-subject dialogue sequences should be familiar as recognizable framing and editing patterns. In midsized groups where each subject is dramatically significant, master shot stagings are often desirable. The three examples that follow show asymmetrical stagings and the use of depth in figure placement.

1



In a group master shot in which the action is staged for one viewpoint, the screen too easily becomes the theatrical proscenium. Rather than have a scene staged across the frame, players can be staged along the lens axis, as with the group of boys in the hallway in frames 1 and 2. Here the players are seen in profile. Foreground players may turn from the camera occasionally to react to background players, but they can be directed to speak or respond to players across from them as well.

2



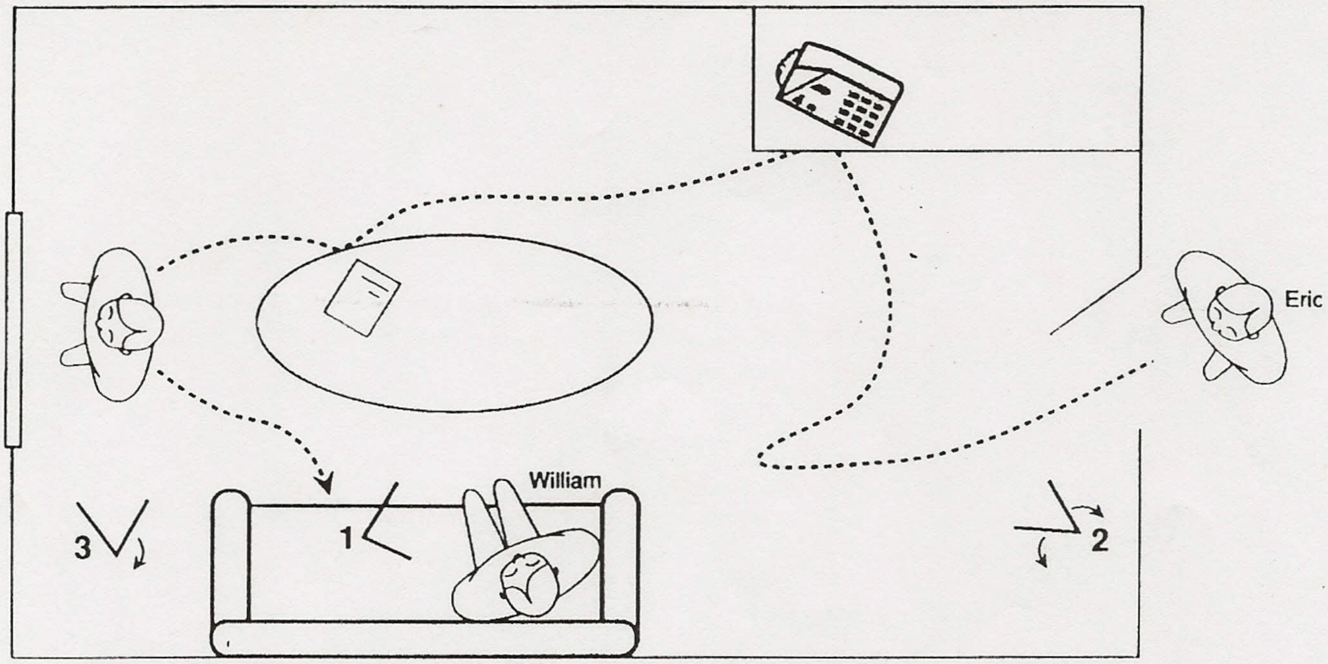


FIGURE 5-3

Floor or ground plan showing entry and movements of character Eric, and the camera positions to cover the action.

stands in front of William, goes to the phone, picks up a book from the table, looks out the window, and then sits down on the couch. The whole action has been covered by three camera positions.

When you analyze a sequence, make a floor plan. It allows you to recreate what the room or location looks like in its entirety, to record how the characters moved around, and to decide how the camera was placed. This will help you in future to decide where to place your own camera. It will also show how little of an environment need be shown for the audience to infer the whole, that is, create it in their imaginations.

STRATEGY FOR STUDY

Your split page log should contain action-side descriptions of each shot and its action as well as sound-side notes detailing the content and positioning of dialogue, music start/stopping points, and featured sound effects (that is, other than synchronous, or "sync" sound. Sound that logically arises from the location is called *diagetic sound.* Nondiagetic sound is that which has been applied as counterpoint, for example, the sound of a loud heartbeat placed over a man trapped in an elevator.

Scrutinize the sequence by categories. I have listed them in a logical order for inquiry, but do not hesitate to reorder my list if you prefer.

Very important: *read from film rather than read into it.* Film is a complex and deceptive medium; like a glib and clever acquaintance, it can make you uneasy about your perceptions and too ready to accept what should be seen or should be felt. Recognize what you felt and connect your impressions with what can actually be seen and heard in the film.

To avoid overload, concentrate on a few of the given aspects at a time and try to find at least one example of everything so you understand the concepts at work.

First Impressions What was the progression of feeling you had watching the sequence?

Definition and Statistics
What determines the beginning and ending points of the sequence? Is its span determined by:

- being at one location?
- being a continuous segment of time?
- a particular mood?
- the stages of a process?
- something else?

How long is the sequence (minutes and seconds)?

How many picture cuts does it contain? The duration of each shot and how often the camera angle is changed are aspects of a director's style but they are just as likely to be derived from the sequence's content. Try to decide whether the content or its treatment are determining the number of cuts.

Use of Camera
How many different motivations can you find for the camera to make a movement?

- does the camera follow the movement of a character?
- does a car or other moving object permit the camera to pan the length of the street so that camera movement seems to arise from action in the frame?
- does it lay out a landscape or a scene geography for the audience?
- is the move one that gets closer, and intensifies our relationship with someone or something?
- does the camera move away from someone or something so we see more objectively?
- does the camera reveal significant information by moving?
- is the move really a reframing to accommodate a rearrangement of characters?
- is the move a reaction, panning to a new speaker, for instance?
- what else might be responsible for motivating this particular camera move?

When is the camera used subjectively?

- when do we directly experience a character's point of view?

- are there special signs that the camera is seeing subjectively? (For example, an unsteady handheld camera used in *Owl Creek* creates the running man's point of view.)
- what is the dramatic justification?

Are there changes of camera height?

- to accommodate subject matter?
- to make you see in a certain way?
- for other reasons?

Use of Sound
What are the sound perspectives used?

- complementing camera position (near mike for close shots, far from mike for longer shots and so replicating camera perspective)?
- counterpointing camera perspective? (Robert Altman's films are fond of giving us the intimate conversation of two characters distantly traversing a large landscape.)
- uniformly intimate (as with a narration, or with voice-over and "thoughts voices" that function as a character's interior monologue)?
- other situations?

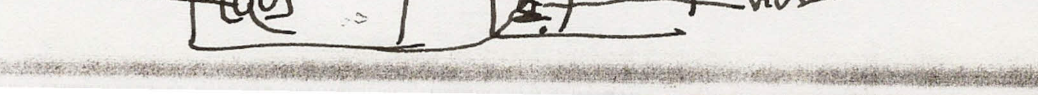
How are particular sound effects used?

- to build atmosphere and mood?
- as punctuation?
- to motivate a cut? (next sequence's sound rises until we cut to it)
- as a narrative device? (horn honks so woman gets up and goes to window where she discovers her sister is making a surprise visit)
- to build, sustain, or defuse tension?
- to provide rhythm? (meal prepared in a montage of brief shots to the rhythmic sound of a man splitting logs; last shot, man and woman sit down to meal)
- to create uncertainty?
- other situations?

→ the centre of attention of one cut should be the same as that of the next

Editing
What motivates each cut?

- is there an action match to carry the cut?
- is there a compositional relationship between the two shots that makes the cut interesting and worthwhile? (*Don't Look Now* is obsessed with these.)



- is there a movement relationship that carries the cut (for example, cut from car moving left-to-right to boat moving left-to-right)?
- does someone or something leave the frame (making us expect a new frame)?
- does someone or something fill the frame, blanking it out and permitting a cut to another frame that starts blanked and then clears?
- does someone or something enter the frame and demand closer attention?
- are we cutting to follow someone's eyeline, to see what they see?
- is there a sound, or a line, that demands that we see the source?
- are we cutting to show the effect upon a listener and what defines the right moment to cut?
- are we cutting to a speaker at a particular moment that is visually revealing? What defines that moment?
- if the cut intensifies our attention, what justifies that?
- if the cut relaxes and objectifies our attention, what justifies that?
- is the cut to a parallel activity (that is, something going on simultaneously)?
- is there some sort of comparison or irony being set up through juxtaposition?
- are we cutting to a rhythm (perhaps of an effect, music, or the cadences of speech)?
- other reasons?

What is the relationship of words to images?

- does what is shown illustrate what is said?
- is there a difference and therefore a counterpoint between what is shown and what is heard?
- is there a meaningful contradiction between what is said and what is shown?
- does what is said come from another time frame (for example, a memory of one of the characters or a comment on something in the past)?
- is there a point at which words are used to move us forward or backward in time? (That is, can you pinpoint a change of tense in the film's grammar? This might be done visually, as in the old cliché of autumn leaves falling after we have seen summer scenes.)
- any others?

When a line overlaps a cut, what is the impact of the first strong word on the new image?

- does it help identify the new image?
- does it give it a particular emphasis or interpretation?
- is the effect expected (satisfying perhaps) or unexpected (maybe a shock)?
- is there a deliberate contradiction?
- other effects?

Where and how is music used?

- how is it initiated? (often when characters or story begin some kind of motion)
- what does the music suggest by its texture, instrumentation, etc.?
- how is it finished? (often when characters or story arrive at a new location)
- what comment is it making? (ironic? sympathetic? lyrical? revealing the inner state of a character or situation? other?)
- from what other sound (if any) does it emerge (segue)?
- what other sound does it merge (or segue) into at its close?

Point of View and Blocking

Blocking is a theatrical term meaning the way that actors and camera are moved in relation to the set. The term "point of view" goes beyond whose literal eyeline the audience shares and includes the notion of whose reality the viewer most identifies with at any given time. This turns out to be a much more complicated and interesting issue than it first seems, for a film like a novel can present a main point of view (probably through a point-of-view character) and also multiple, conflicting points of view that are associated with other characters. The author's statement is largely achieved through the handling of point of view, yet the work's appearances can be deceptive unless you look very carefully.

Sometimes there is one central character, and one point of view, like Travis Bickle's in Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* (1975). Or there may be a couple whose relationship is at issue, as in Woody Allen's *Annie Hall* (1977). Successive scenes may be devoted to establishing alternate characters' dilemmas and conflicts. Altman's *Nashville* (1975) has nearly two dozen central characters, and the film's focus is the idea of the music town of Nashville being their point of convergence and their confrontation with change. Here, evidently, we find the characters are part of a pattern, and the pattern itself is surely an authorial point of view that questions the way people subscribe to their own destiny. In Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* (1994) and Robert Altman's *Short Cuts* (1993) both use serpentine storylines with characters who come and go and appear in different permutations. Each sequence is liable to have a different point-of-view character. Both films deal with the style and texture of groups, and their time and place.

Following are some ways of digging into a sequence to establish how it covertly structures the way we see and react to its characters. First a word of caution. Point of view is a complex notion that can only be specified confidently after considering the aims and tone of the whole work. Taking a magnifying glass to one sequence is therefore a way of verifying your overall hypothesis. The way the camera is used, the frequency with which one character's feelings are revealed, the amount of development he or she goes through, the vibrancy of the acting—all these factors play a part in enlisting our sympathy and interest.

In your sequence under study, to whom at different times is the dialogue or narration addressed?

- by one character to another?
- to himself (thinking aloud, reading diary or letter)?

- to the audience (narration, interview, prepared statement)?
- other situations?

How many camera positions were used? (Use your floor plan.)

- show basic camera positions and label them A, B, C, etc.
- show camera dollying movements with dotted line leading to new position.
- mark shots in your log with the appropriate A, B, C camera angles.
- notice how the camera stays to one side of subject-to-subject axis (an imaginary line that the camera avoids crossing) to keep characters facing in the same screen direction from shot to shot. When this principle is broken, it is variously called *crossing the line, crossing the axis,* or *breaking the 180-degree rule,* and has the effect of disrupting the audience's sense of spatial relationships.
- how often is the camera close to the crucial axis between characters?
- how often does the camera subjectively share a character's eyeline?
- when and why does it take an objective stance to the situation (that is, either a distanced viewpoint, or one independent of eyelines)?

Character Blocking: How did the characters and camera move in the scene? To the location and camera movement sketch you have made, add dotted lines to show the characters' movements (called blocking). You can use different colors for clarity.

What points of view did the author engage us in?

- whose story is this sequence if you go by gut reaction?
- taking into account the angles on each character, with whose point of view were you led to sympathize?
- how many psychological viewpoints did you share? (Some may have been momentary or fragmentary, and perhaps in contradiction to what you were seeing.)
- are the audience's sympathies structured by camera and editing? Or are they molded independently by perhaps acting or the situation itself?

FICTION AND THE DOCUMENTARY

Most of these analytical questions apply equally to the documentary film and one realizes that the two forms have much in common. This is more than a similarity in film language, for some of the important questions cannot be applied to most nature, travelogue, industrial, or educational films. These genres generally lack what distinguishes the fictional and documentary forms—authorial vision. That is, they often lack a point of view, a changing dramatic pressure, and a critical perspective upon what it means to be human. These elements are crucial in providing the feeling of an authorial voice, of a human sensibility unifying the events it shows, even though (and we must never forget this) the making of a film is collaborative. We sense the presence of a storyteller's sympathy and intelligence, and what in lesser hands might be technical or formulaic becomes vibrantly human.

Use your script.

Writing on the Script

As well as making notes on the continuity report form you should use your script in noting down continuity points. The great advantage of writing on the script lies in the fact that you can match the action to the dialogue with great accuracy.

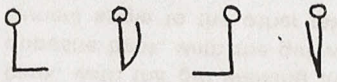
Abbreviations of words and the use of symbols will enable you to write quickly on the script. Some people use a form of shorthand.

Below are a few commonly used abbreviations and symbols:

CR	Camera right
CL	Camera left
R	Right—from the actor's point of view
L	Left—from the actor's point of view (You might prefer to use the abbreviations R and L for camera right and left and r and l referring to right and left from the actor's point of view.)
X	Could be used to denote 'crosses', i.e. Fred X R—Fred crosses camera right, or to denote 'exits' or 'extra', i.e. XXR—extra exits camera right.
f/w	Forwards
b/w	Backwards
i/f	In front
b/h	Behind
f/g	Foreground
b/g	Background

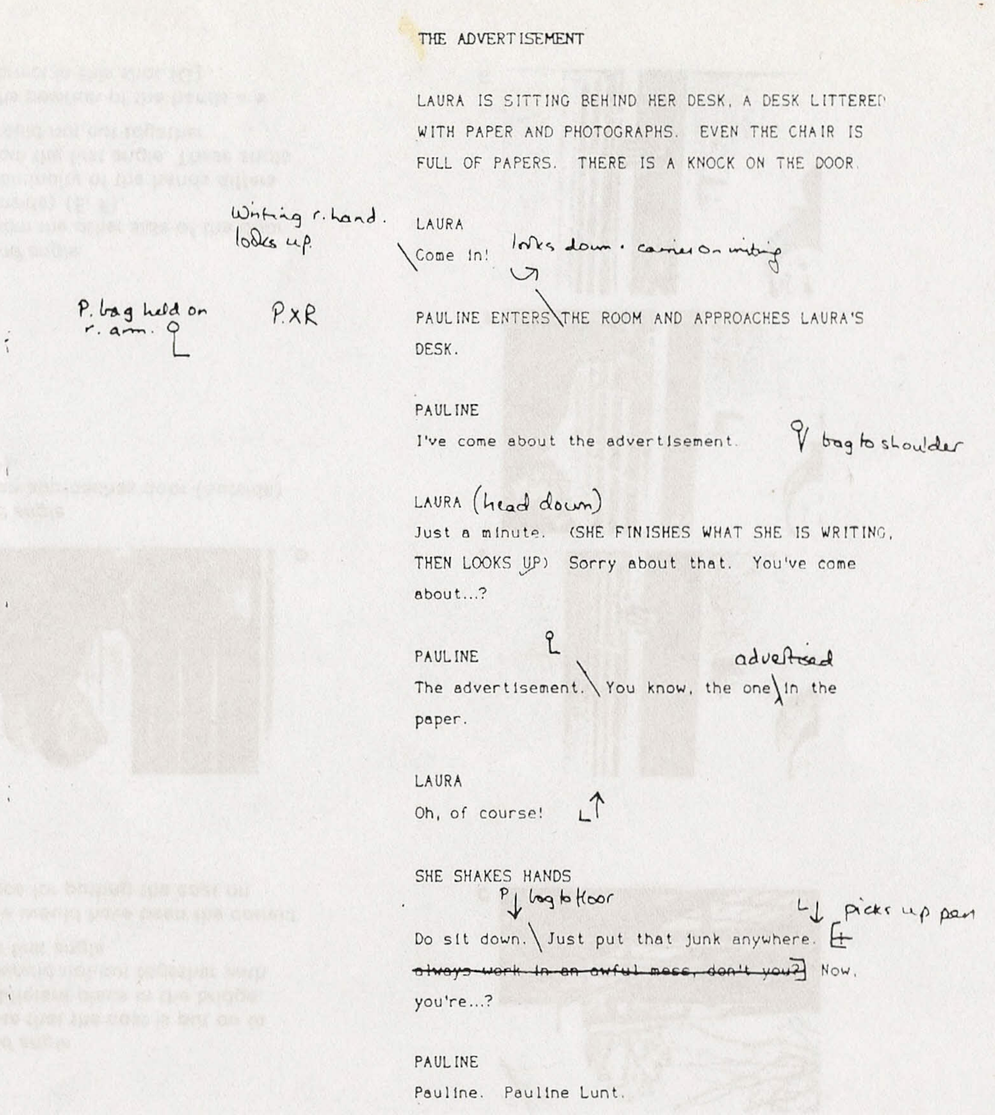
An arrow can be used to denote a turn, a stand or a sit. ↪ ↓

A stick man can be used to show arm movements. This is very useful when you want to note whether someone is eating, drinking or smoking.



Dialogue changes

It is part of your job to keep a note of dialogue changes, and you should keep your script up to date as these changes occur.



THE ADVERTISEMENT

LAURA IS SITTING BEHIND HER DESK, A DESK LITTERED WITH PAPER AND PHOTOGRAPHS. EVEN THE CHAIR IS FULL OF PAPERS. THERE IS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR.

Writing r. hand. looks up

LAURA

Come in! looks down · carries on writing

P. bag held on r. arm. P.XR

PAULINE ENTERS THE ROOM AND APPROACHES LAURA'S DESK.

PAULINE

I've come about the advertisement. bag to shoulder

LAURA (head down)

Just a minute. (SHE FINISHES WHAT SHE IS WRITING, THEN LOOKS UP) Sorry about that. You've come about...?

PAULINE

The advertisement. You know, the one advertised in the paper.

LAURA

Oh, of course! L↑

SHE SHAKES HANDS

P↓ bag to floor L↓ picks up pen

Do sit down. Just put that junk anywhere. ~~always work in an awful mess, don't you?~~ Now, you're...?

PAULINE

Pauline. Pauline Lunt.

Continuity of Action

Some of the least obvious aspects of continuity are no less important than those already discussed. But they are often overlooked because they are not often apparent in the finished production. The reason they are not apparent is usually because the editor has found a way round the mistakes in one way or another, but in doing so, the artistic role of the post production editing process may have been severely limited. Such errors put an unnecessary and time-consuming burden on the editor.

Let us examine these aspects of continuity by starting with the simplest—continuity of action.

Example 1: A girl walks across a bridge, putting her coat on in the process.

The director has planned two camera angles on this action: one from the bank, with the girl walking away from the camera, and the other from the opposite bank, with the girl walking towards the camera. The cut from one camera angle to the other takes place when the girl is somewhere on the bridge.

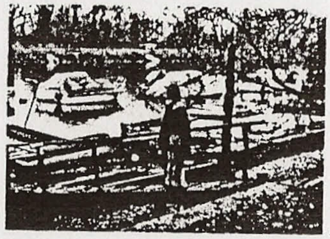
Suppose in shooting these two angles, there was an error of continuity in the action of putting on the coat. When the girl put on the coat in the second shot, she was in a different position on the bridge from when she did this in the first shot.

If those shots were then cut and joined together at the logical place, where the director had planned it, the result would show a jump in the action—a jump cut.

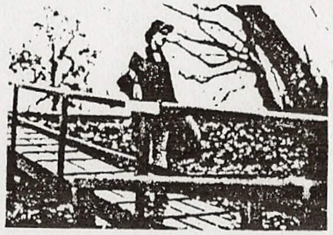
It is possible in that situation for the editor to 'cover up' this error of continuity by cutting earlier or later. But that would not give as smooth a cut as if the action had been repeated correctly in the second shot. In other words, the cut had to be made where it was mechanically possible and not in the way that was most suitable dramatically.

Example 2: A man opens a door with a key. He enters and closes the door behind him.

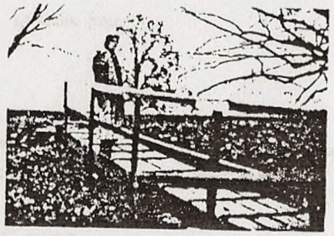
There are two camera angles—one on each side of the door. The second angle is taken much later and as the action with the key has been shot on the first angle, the door is set for the man to just push it open for the second shot. On that angle he pushes the door open and walks in and everyone accepts the take. *But he uses a different hand on the door* and the editor is faced with the same problem as before.


A

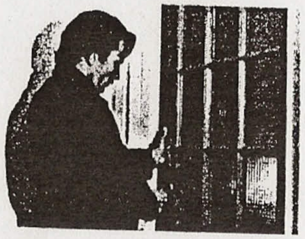
1st angle


B

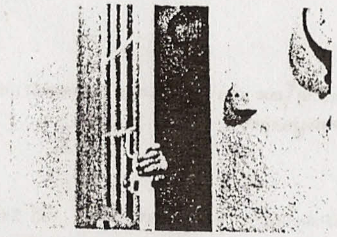
2nd angle
Note that the coat is put on in a different place in the bridge. It would not cut together with the first angle

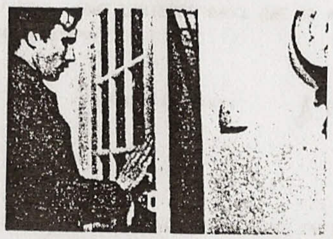

C

This would have been the correct place for putting the coat on

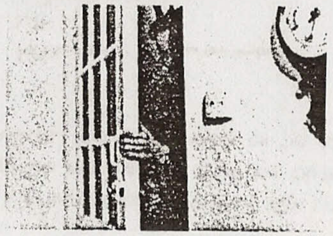

D

1st angle
Man approaches door (outside) (D).


E


F

2nd angle
From the other side of the door (inside) (E, F).
Continuity of the hands differs from the first angle. These shots would not cut together


G

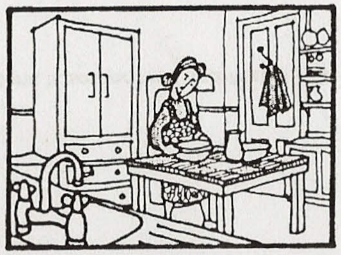
The position of the hands are correct in this shot (G)

Fred and Mabel: Coverage Planned

The director has planned the following shots for Scene 1 and he has further planned to shoot them in this order:

1. Wide angle of whole scene (master)
2. Tight 2-s Fred and Mabel at sink
3. MCU tap and hand
4. CU dressing going on to finger
5. CU Fred wincing
6. MCU cupboard—tin being removed
7. MS Mabel looking pleased with pie
8. 2-s Fred and Mabel at door

Without being able to show the action in the master shot, I shall try to describe it as fully as possible. When actually doing the continuity for the master, you should have written or noticed as much of the following as possible. There are some obvious pitfalls and important things to notice for the other angles and I have mentioned these where necessary.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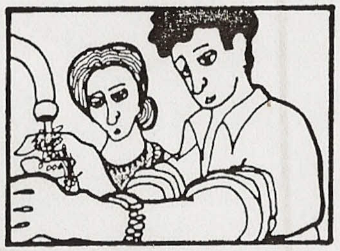
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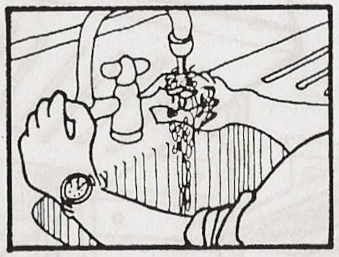
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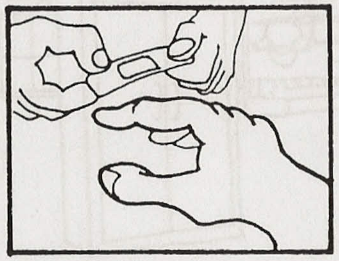
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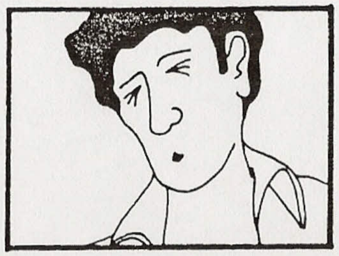
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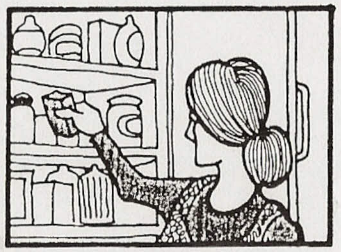
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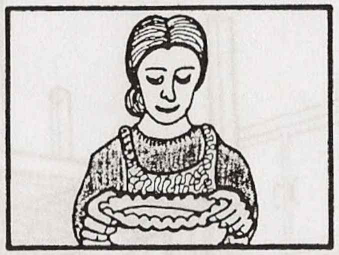
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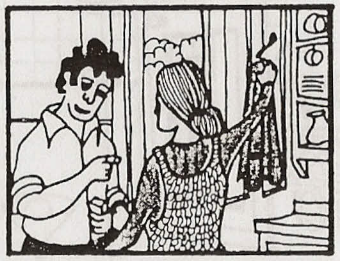

8

Number of shots planned
1. Wide angle (W/A). 2. Tight two shot (Tight 2-s). 3. Medium close-up tap and hand (MCU tap and hand). 4. Close-up plaster (CU plaster). 5. Close-up Fred (CU Fred). 6. Medium close-up cupboard (MCU cupboard). 7. Mid-shot Mabel (MS Mabel). 8. Two shot at door (2-s at door).

The Complete Scene

We have now looked at the different ingredients to observe for continuity—action, dialogue, props and costume. Now we shall put them all together in the following scene:

Fred and Mabel
Scene 1: Kitchen: day
MABEL IS PREPARING AN APPLE PIE.
FRED COMES IN FROM THE GARDEN AND RUSHES OVER TO THE SINK.
HE TURNS ON THE TAP AND HOLDS HIS HAND UNDER THE STREAM OF WATER.
MABEL GOES OVER TO HIM.

MABEL: Fred, Fred, what's happened?

MABEL EXAMINES HIS HURT HAND.

MABEL: How on earth did you do that?

FRED: The bloody adjuster stuck on the lawn mower.

MABEL: You've got dirt in it.

SHE PUTS HIS HAND BACK UNDER THE TAP.

MABEL: I'll get you a plaster.

SHE GOES TO THE CUPBOARD AND GETS OUT A TIN OF DRESSINGS.

MABEL: Do you want some antiseptic on it?

FRED: No, don't bother.

MABEL TAKES A TOWEL AND GIVES IT TO FRED. HE DRIES HIS HAND ON IT.

FRED: Thanks, love.

MABEL STICKS DRESSING ON FRED'S FINGER. HE WINCES.

MABEL: Did I hurt you?

FRED: No. It's just a bit sore. (PAUSE) Right. I'll finish the lawn.

BOTH GO TO THE BACK DOOR.

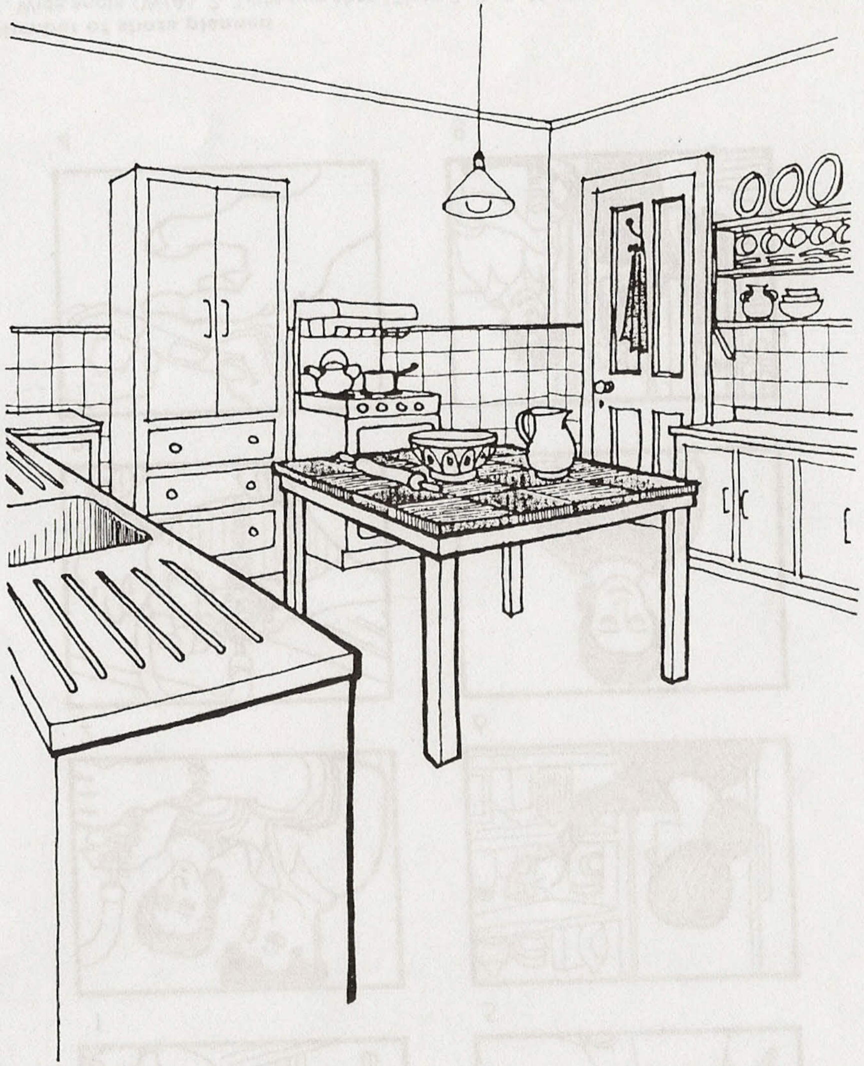
FRED: What time's lunch?

MABEL: Is half an hour all right?

FRED: Fine. Give me a shout.

HE KISSES HER AND GOES OUT.

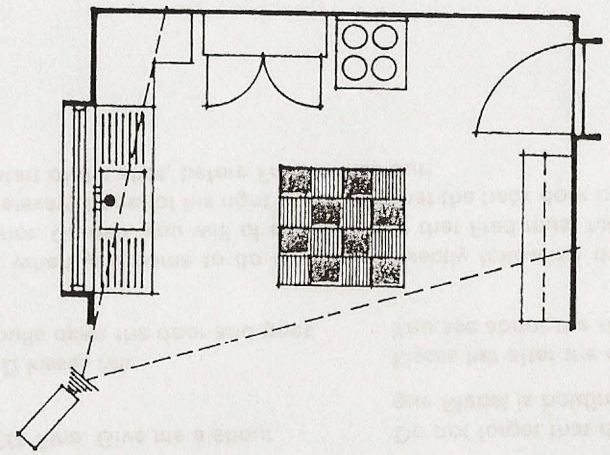
Scene 2: Garden: day
FRED COMES OUT OF THE HOUSE AND WALKS TO LAWN MOWER . . .



The scene is set for Fred and Mabel.

Wide Angle: Fred and Mabel Scene: 1

Action and sound	*Important to observe*
MABEL standing behind the kitchen table puts the last thumb print in the pie and stands back to admire her work.	How does she stand back? Wiping hands on apron or what?
She turns to the oven and opens the door.	Which way does she turn? Note the oven door action. Is the door left open or shut?
She turns back to table and picks up pie.	
FRED comes in through back door (which is closed to start), he leaves it open, crosses behind Mabel and dashes to sink. He turns on the tap with left hand and puts finger of right hand under the jet of water.	Back door closed to start—left open by Fred—keep an eye on it. Which tap does Fred turn on and with which hand? Which finger of which hand is cut?
MABEL puts pie back on table—closes door of the oven with her knee in passing and hurries over to Fred.	Pie does not figure again, but it is left on the table so do not forget that it is there. Note oven door action.
MABEL: Fred, Fred, what's happened?	Does she say that line on the move or when she is by Fred's side? Which side of Fred does she end up on?
FRED doesn't answer. Just swears under his breath.	
MABEL is now at the sink. She takes his right hand with her left.	Which hand takes which? Important to note that the tap is left running.
MABEL: How on earth did you do that?	
FRED: The bloody adjuster stuck on the lawn mower.	
MABEL: You've got dirt in it.	
She sticks his hand back under the tap.	During the above dialogue, does she hold his hand all the time? Does she bring his hand up to her face to look closely at the wound, or bend down to look. When *exactly* does she stick his hand back under the tap?
MABEL: I'll get you a dressing.	
She crosses to the cupboard—opens the door (right hand to open it)—takes out tin of dressings (with right hand)—transfers tin to her left and says:	Note all her actions at the cupboard—which hand does what. N.B. There is a bottle of antiseptic in the cupboard. Make sure it is still there for the cutaways.
MABEL: Do you want some antiseptic on it?	Does she say that line while transferring the tin to left hand or after?
FRED: No, don't bother.	



Plan view of kitchen with camera position showing complete scene as per page 98.

. . . and continue doing.

Wide Angle: Fred and Mabel Scene: 2

Action and sound	*Important to observe*
MABEL leaves the cupboard door open—moves to the back door—half closes it and with her right hand picks up a towel from a hook on the back.	Note that cupboard door. I said to keep an eye on the back door.
She moves forward to the sink. FRED turns off the tap with his left hand and takes the towel from Mabel also with his left hand.	Tap action. At what point does Fred turn it off? i.e.: what is Mabel doing then? Which hand does he turn it off with and does he take the towel before or after turning off the tap and with which hand?
FRED starts gingerly to dry his cut finger.	
MABEL opens the tin of dressings with her right hand and puts the lid down (upside down) on the draining board.	Note the action—particularly with the lid.
She takes out a dressing and puts the tin down on the draining board beside the lid (on the right side).	
FRED: Thanks love.	When does Fred speak? Is Mabel still taking the lid off the tin, or the dressing out of the tin or what?
FRED throws the towel down on the draining board.	Note that Fred speaks and then throws the towel down. Also note where it lands.
MABEL unpeels the dressing from its backing and places it on Fred's finger. Fred turns his head away and winces.	Does she use both hands to place the dressing on his finger? Note the way Fred's head turns to wince.
MABEL: Did I hurt you?	Note that she speaks before he turns his head back.
FRED turns his head back.	
FRED: No, it's just a bit sore.	
MABEL takes her hands away.	Note when she removes her hands.
FRED: Right. I'll finish the lawn.	
MABEL picks up the towel with her left hand and moves to the door.	Note the hand.
FRED picks up the lid of the dressings tin and places it on the box—picks up the box with left hand and moves to the door.	Note the hand, also that Mabel moved to door before Fred.
MABEL hangs the towel up at the door—FRED moves over to her with the tin which he hands over (his left hand to her right).	Note the hand action.
FRED: What time's lunch?	
MABEL: Is half an hour all right?	
FRED: Fine. Give me a shout.	Do not forget that during the dialogue Mabel is holding the tin.
FRED kisses her. He pulls open the door and goes out.	Kisses her after the dialogue. Note. You see about the door?

N.B. when you come to do the scene directly following this one, which is Exterior, Garden, you will of course know that Fred must have a dressing on the relevant finger of his right hand, and that the back door is slightly open, at the start of the shot, before Fred comes out!

Remaining Coverage: Fred and Mabel
Scene: 1

Having shot the master, the director goes on to shoot the rest of the coverage. This is your first test.

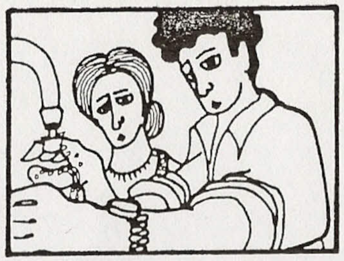
2-s Fred and Mabel at sink
From Fred turning on the tap—putting his hand under the water—you will remember which tap and which hand—Mabel comes up to him—she examines his hand—chat—tap still running—she replaces his hand under the tap—she exits frame (do you know which way?)—chat with her out of vision—she returns with towel and tin (in which hands?)—Fred turns off tap and takes towel—he dries his hand. Mabel meanwhile goes through the same actions as the master shot opening the tin. Fred puts the towel on the draining board. Mabel places dressing on Fred's finger. Fred turns his head away (which way?) and winces. Mabel speaks—Fred turns back to her and speaks—Mabel takes her hand away. Fred says he will finish the lawn. Mabel takes the towel and exits. Fred does his action with the tin of dressing and also exits.

MCU tap and hand
Hand in to tap—turns on water (which tap and which hand?). The finger, (suitably wounded) is placed under the water.

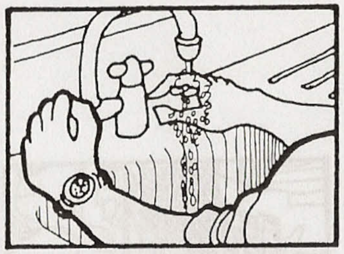
CU dressing going on finger
Mabel's hand holding dressing—places it on Fred's outstretched finger and presses firmly into place. (Make sure that Fred's finger is no longer wet, as he has just dried it with a towel.)

CU Fred wincing
Fred turns his head and winces. Mabel says her line out of vision and Fred turns back.

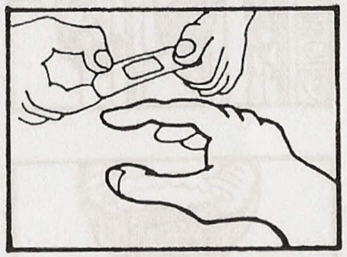
Other shots planned



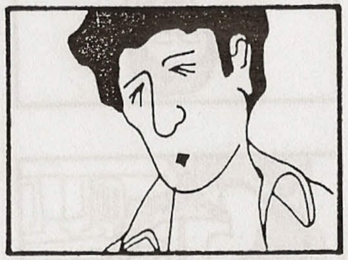
Tight two shot (Tight 2-s)



Medium close-up tap and hand (MCU tap and hand)



Close-up plaster (CU plaster)



Close-up Fred (CU Fred)

Make sure they do it right.

Remaining Coverage: Fred and Mabel
Scene: 2

MCU cupboard

The cupboard door is shut to start. Mabel's right hand opens the door and reveals a tin of dressings and a bottle of antiseptic (both of which have been replaced after the W/A)—her right hand takes the bottle, then replaces it and takes tin of dressings—the cupboard door is left open and she moves her hand away.

MS Mabel looking pleased with the pie

As you noted on the master that she rubs her hands on the front of her apron, she can repeat that action. You also noted the way she turned to the oven, and that she left the pie on the table and did not take it with her.

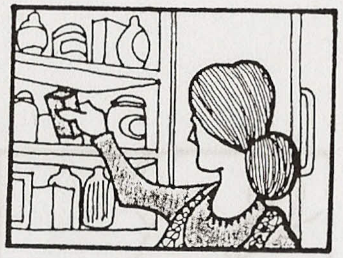
2-s Fred and Mabel at door

Mabel goes to back door (holding the towel in left hand). The back door is half closed. She hangs the towel on the back. Fred enters from foreground to form a two-shot (Fred's finger is dressed and he carries the tin with him in his left hand). He hands tin to Mabel—chat—he kisses her and goes out through door.

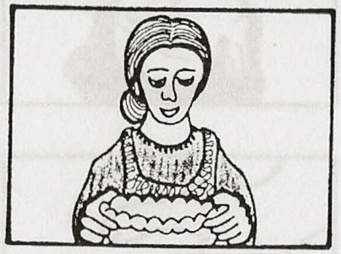
Summing up

So, what are you left with at the end? First you have the whole scene played in wide angle, with everything contained in the one shot. Then you have a number of other shots from different angles of various sections of the scene. Because you have ensured that the action during every shot is as near as possible identical to the master wide angle, it will be possible to cut, say, from the master of the 2-s of Fred and Mabel at the sink, to the MCU of the taps, and so on at any one of a number of places. The cuts will then be determined in order that each piece of action may be seen in the final result from the most suitable angle in accordance with the dramatic interpretation of the script, and the resulting material available.

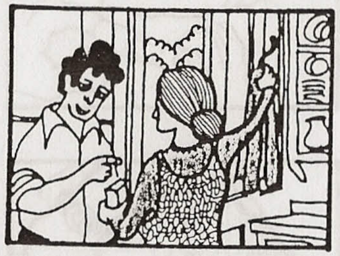
Remainder of shots planned



Medium close-up cupboard (MCU cupboard)



Mid shot Mabel (MS Mabel)



Two shot at door (2-s at door)

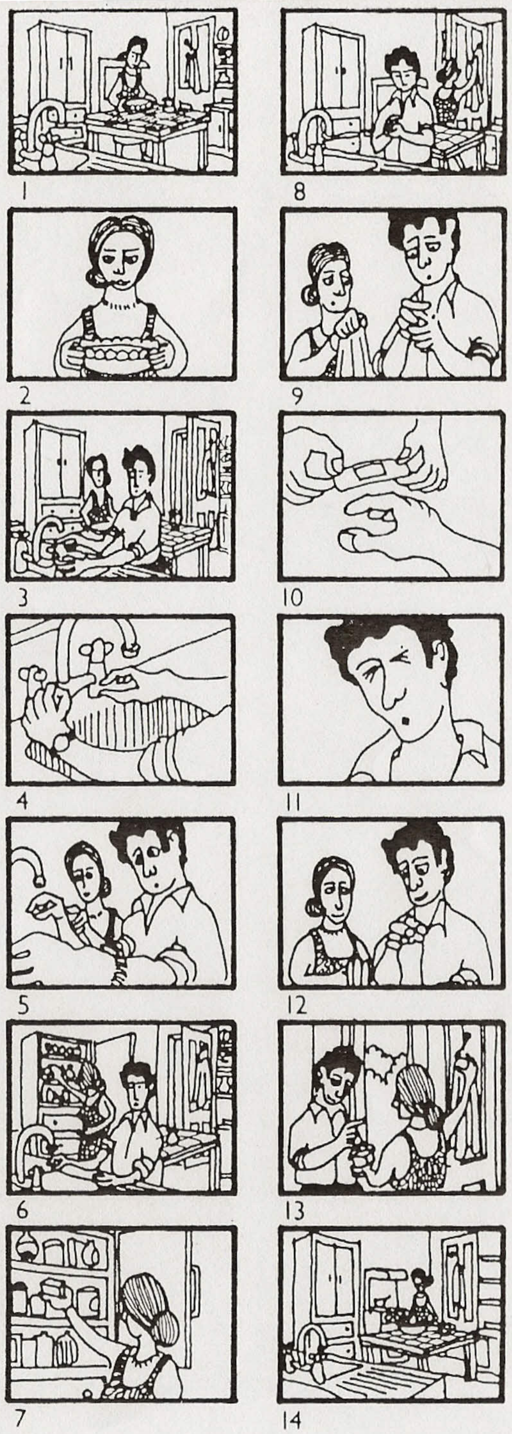
Fred and Mabel: Edited Sequence

Finally, the scene has been edited, and the completed sequence might look like this:

Scene 1: Int. Kitchen. Day

1. W/A /MABEL IS PREPARING AN
2 MS Mabel APPLE PIE/
3. W/A FRED COMES IN/FROM THE GARDEN, AND RUSHES
4. MCU tap OVER TO THE SINK. HE TURNS/ON THE TAP AND HOLDS HIS HAND UNDER THE STREAM OF WATER
5. 2-s at sink MABEL GOES OVER TO HIM/
MABEL: Fred, Fred, what's happened?
MABEL EXAMINES HIS HAND
MABEL: How on earth did you do that?
FRED: The bloody adjuster stuck on the lawn mower.
MABEL: You've got dirt in it.
SHE PUTS HIS HAND BACK UNDER THE TAP
MABEL: I'll get you a dressing
6. W/A SHE/GOES TO THE CUPBOARD AND GETS
7. MCU cupboard OUT/A TIN OF DRESSINGS
MABEL: Do you want some antiseptic on it?
8. W/A /*FRED*: No, don't bother.
9. 2-s MABEL TAKES A TOWEL AND GIVES IT TO FRED./
HE DRIES HIS HAND ON IT.
FRED: Thanks love.
10. MCU dressing MABEL STICKS DRESSING/ON FRED'S
11. Cu Fred FINGER/HE WINCES
12. 2-s /*MABEL*: Did I hurt you?
FRED: No. It's just a bit sore. (PAUSE)
Right. I'll finish the lawn.
13. 2-s by door BOTH GO/TO BACK DOOR
FRED: What time's lunch?
MABEL: Is half an hour all right?
FRED: Fine. Give me a shout.
14. W/A HE KISSES/HER AND GOES OUT.

The edited sequence



1. Wide angle
2. Mid shot Mabel
3. Wide angle
4. Medium close-up tap and hand
5. Tight two shot
6. Wide angle
7. Medium close-up cupboard
8. Wide angle
9. Tight two shot
10. Close-up plaster
11. Close-up Fred
12. Tight two shot
13. Two shot at door
14. Wide angle

Goldsmiths Film Co-operative - Contact Sheet.

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ASMCP

P.O.BOX 21790 E14 6SS

Dear Friend

The ASMCP stands for the Asian Society Media Club Promotions.
The ASMCP, is an organisation set up for young Asian people 16-30, who are interested in a career in the media industry.
Our main aim is to provide young people with information and knowledge of how the industry works and how to go about tackling various problems that they may have or are experiencing.

The ASMCP will also provide a platform for young people to meet media professional who through their years of experience will be able to pass on invaluable information to them at our seminars and networking evenings.

The seminars will be divided into 2 segments:

1:	Conference and debates.	(Morning)
2:	Practical projects	(Afternoon)

For the practical projects we are hoping to invite professional actors & directors (local & from abroad) so that people can get some experience of working with professional people.

Apart from the Seminars the ASMCP will also be organising regular monthly networking evenings; this will provide people with the opportunity to meet and mingle with many people from the industry, and make lots of new contacts.

The networking evening s will also be an opportunity for people to show their talents to a live audience. Both the seminars and networking evenings will be filmed by the ASMCP, to be shown to a wide range of audiences. (With permission from participants)

Through out next year the ASMCP will also be organising many events this will provide people with the opportunity to work with professional people to gain some experience and build their portfolios.

The ASMCP will be organising a modelling competition next year, so if you have a desire to become a model, then please send us 3 pictures of yourself with your details.
We are also looking for people interested in becoming fashion designer's, if you think your designs are good then please send us 2-3 sketches of your work.

Please fill in the enclosed questionnaire and return it to the above address, this questionnaire is designed to provide us with the information to organise the seminars & networking evenings according to peoples needs.
The closing date for the questionnaires is 18th November 99

Details of the seminars and networking evenings will be sent to you.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact us at the above address.

ASMCP
Sana Khan

ASMCP

P.O.BOX 21790 E14 6SS

(Please circle all relevant answer's)

Name:____________________ **Age:**________________

Occupation:__________________ **Male** **Female**

(If applicable)
What course are you studying?______________________________

Place of birth?________________ **Your language?**________________

What other languages do you speak?__________________________

1. Are you interested in a career in the media? **Yes** **No**

2. What area of the media are you interested in?
(Please circle as many as you want)

FILM **TV** **RADIO** **MUSIC** **DANCE** **DRAMA**

FASHION **BEAUTY** **JOURNALISM** **MODELLING** **PHOTOGRAPHY**

3. Within these areas what would you like to do / or become?
(Please specify)

____

____

4. Are you currently looking for work / experience in these areas? **Yes** **No**

5. Would you be interested in attending seminar's with Media professionals who are / or have been working in the media industry?
Yes **No**

6. Would you be interested in networking with people who share the same interest as you?
Yes **No**

7. Would you be interested in receiving, information about ASMCP'S future events, seminar's & Networking evenings?
Yes **No**

If yes, please provide us with your details below.

OPTIONAL - **(All information provided will only be used for our database to send out information to you & will be treated with full confidentiality)**

Name: ____________________ **Tel:**____________________

Address:____________________ **E-mail:**____________________
____
____

Thank you for taking time out to answer this questionnaire. Please return it to the above address. Details of the conferences/seminars and networking evenings will be sent to you by post.